



# Nigeria: Country Focus

**Nigeria:**

**Country Focus**

**November 2025**



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## Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 5 September 2025. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the Methodology section of the Introduction.





## Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
<b>APC</b>	All Progressives Congress party
<b>AVRR-IOM</b>	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
<b>BMZ</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development ( <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i> )
<b>BRGIE</b>	Biafra Republic Government in Exile
<b>CAT</b>	International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
<b>CCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>CCPR-OP2-DP</b>	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>CEDAW</b>	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CERD</b>	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
<b>CRC</b>	International Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRPD</b>	International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ESN</b>	Eastern Security Network





<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>ETAHT</b>	Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking
<b>FCT</b>	Federal Capital Territory
<b>FEWS NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
<b>GHI</b>	Global Hunger Index
<b>GIZ</b>	German Society for International Cooperation ( <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> )
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ILGA</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPOB</b>	Indigenous People of Biafra
<b>ISWAP</b>	Islamic State West Africa Province
<b>JAS</b>	Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad
<b>Juju</b>	A term commonly used to describe a spiritual belief system that involves the use of objects like amulets and the casting of spells <sup>1</sup>
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Area
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (persons)

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<sup>1</sup> Counter Trafficking Network, Tutorial: Juju & Witchcraft, 2020, [url](#), p. 1





Term	Definition
<b>MPRR-SSA</b>	Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa funded by the European Union (EU)
<b>NACTAL</b>	Network of Civil Society Organisations Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour
<b>NAPTIP</b>	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
<b>NHRC</b>	National Human Rights Commission
<b>NCFRMI</b>	National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons
<b>NIS</b>	Nigerian Immigration Service
<b>NPF</b>	Nigeria Police Force
<b>ORFA</b>	Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa
<b>PDP</b>	People's Democratic Party
<b>SAM</b>	Severe acute malnutrition
<b>SARC</b>	Sexual Assault Referral Centres
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SOP</b>	Guidelines for Facilitating the Safe, Dignified and Voluntary Return, Readmission and Reintegration of Migrants in Nigeria Standard Operating Procedures
<b>THB</b>	Trafficking in Human Beings
<b>VAPP Act</b>	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act
<b>WOCON</b>	Women's Consortium of Nigeria





# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection. This report is to be read in conjunction with the [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#). Both COI reports are for use in updating of EUAA’s Country Guidance on Nigeria (2026).

The report provides up-to-date information on key political and human rights developments in Nigeria, including the treatment of selected profiles of the population by state and non-state actors, as well as key aspects of the country’s socio-economic situation. It builds on previous EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) reports on Nigeria, in particular the [EUAA, Country of Origin Information Report – Nigeria: Country Focus, July 2024](#), and the [EUAA Country of Origin Information Report – Nigeria: Trafficking in Human Beings, April 2021](#).

## Methodology

This COI report was written in line with the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#)<sup>2</sup> and the [EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide \(2023\)](#).<sup>3</sup>

### Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) for this COI report draw on previous EUAA COI reports on Nigeria and on internal consultations. The ToR were developed with careful consideration of country of origin information deemed most relevant to the intended users of the report. In addition, as part of the country guidance development process, national asylum authorities from EU+ countries within the Country Guidance Network on Nigeria were surveyed to assess their needs in relation to their respective national caseloads. Their input was incorporated into the design of these terms of reference, with the consolidated feedback and suggestions reflected in the final version presented in Annex 2: Terms of Reference.

The reference period for this report covers from 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2025 and also includes general background information to contextualise the current situation. Drafting was completed on 5 September 2025, followed by peer review (8–19 September 2025) and a quality review process, during which additional information was incorporated until 10 October 2025. The report then underwent internal final review and proofreading by the EUAA prior to publication.

### Collecting information

This report is based on publicly available information from both electronic and print sources gathered through desk-based research, complemented by interviews with oral sources. All

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<sup>2</sup> EUAA COI Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Guide, February 2023, [url](#)





sources used are referenced. To address information gaps identified during the research, the EUAA conducted interviews with experts on selected topics. All interviewed and written sources are referenced in Annex 1: Bibliography. Where information could not be obtained within the drafting timeframe, this is clearly noted in the relevant sections of the report.

## Quality control

In line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023) and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023), the report underwent peer review by COI experts from national authorities from EU+ countries (as noted in the [Acknowledgments](#)) as well as internal peer review by the EUAA COI Sector. All comments provided by the reviewers were duly considered, and most were incorporated into the final draft, which was completed on 10 October 2025.

## Sources

As per EUAA COI research principles,<sup>4</sup> a broad range of published documentary sources was consulted on topics relevant to this report. These include academic publications, think tank analyses, specialised sources on Nigeria, COI reports issued by governmental bodies, information from civil society and NGOs, reports produced by various United Nations entities, locally and regionally based media outlets. In addition, oral sources were interviewed, including scholars, international experts, government officials, and NGO representatives working on the ground in Nigeria. Some interviewees requested anonymity for security and operational reasons. All sources were assessed for their background, publication history, reputability, and current ground-level expertise. The interviews were conducted between July and September 2025, and all oral sources are described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

## Structure and use of the report

The report is structured into three main parts. The first section presents a country overview, including key information on Nigeria's state structure, demographics and significant political developments. The second section focuses on the human rights situation and the treatment by state and non-state actors of specific population profiles. It should be noted that these profiles do not constitute an exhaustive list of all population groups but were selected based on considerations outlined during the development of the terms of reference (see [Defining the terms of reference](#)). The third and final section provides an overview of key socio-economic indicators at the national level, with particular focus on the cities of Lagos and Abuja.

## Terminology

When addressing topics related to Boko Haram, it is important to note that the term serves as an umbrella definition for an armed group comprising internal factions. Most sources do not

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<sup>4</sup> EUAA COI Report Methodology, 2023, [url](#)





explicitly differentiate between the two main factions: Jamaatu Ahlis-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wal-Jihad (JAS) and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which may affect the specificity of information related to their activities, structures and areas of control.

When reporting on issues involving especially cult groups, herder-farmer conflicts, banditry (and in some instances, vigilante groups, separatist armed groups, Islamist groups), sources often use broad labels such as 'criminals', 'gunmen', 'bandits', 'terrorists' to describe perpetrators. Such terminology, at times, creates challenges in distinguishing between different groups and incidents, particularly as some actors overlap. Given the complex nature of these phenomena in Nigeria, it is not always possible to provide precise or clear-cut information about the actors involved.

Further, it is to be noted that some sources use the terms 'human rights defenders' and 'activists' interchangeably.





# Map



## NIGERIA Reference Map

As of 29 Oct. 2020



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
Update date: 29 Oct. 2020 Sources: UNCS, NGA, DCW, Natural Earth, Gov, ESRI, WFP, OCHA. Feedback: ocharowca@un.org www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int

Map 1. Nigeria UN OCHA<sup>5</sup>

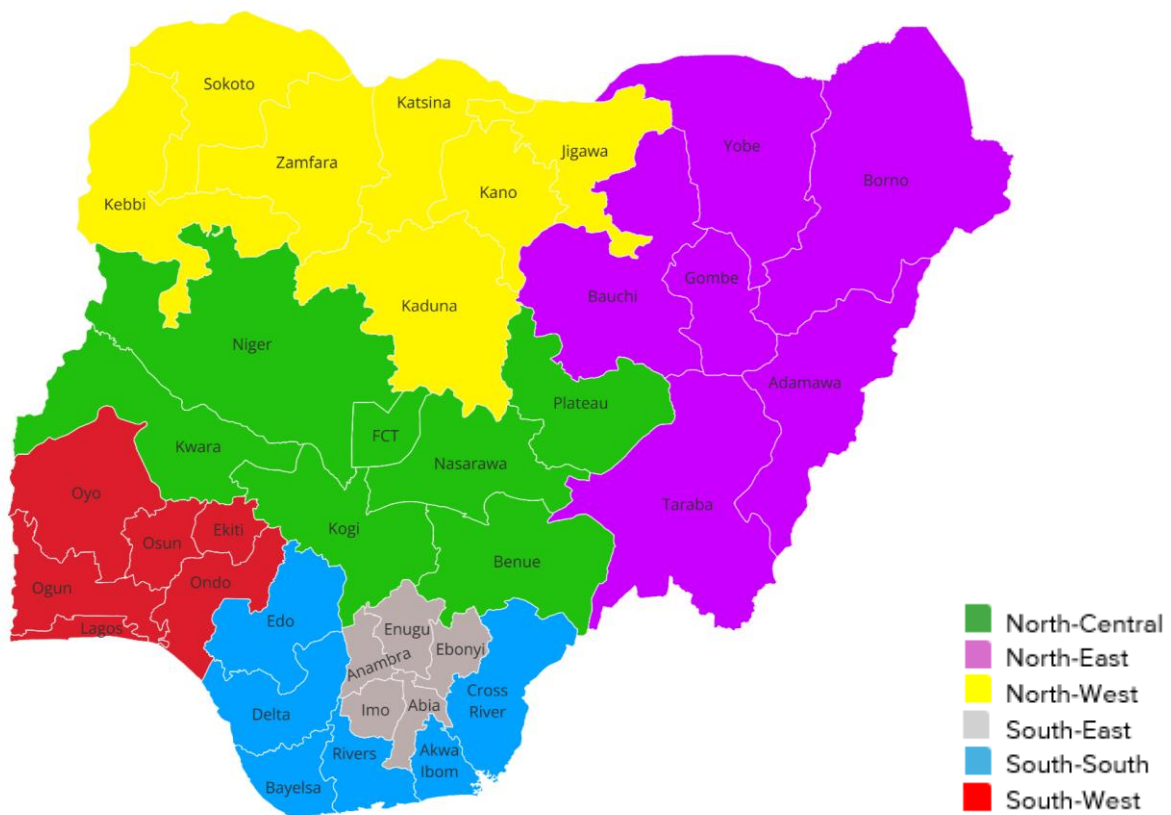
<sup>5</sup> UN OCHA, Nigeria: Reference Map, 29 October 2020, [url](#)



# 1. Country overview

## 1.1. Historical background and state structure

The current territorial configuration of the Nigerian state is the result of British colonial rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The country gained independence in 1960 and experienced a civil war between 1967 and 1970, following the declaration of independence by the secessionist state of Biafra. The war officially ended on 15 January 1970 with Biafra's surrender. In the years that followed, Nigeria underwent a series of military regimes and civilian administrations, before transitioning to a more stable democratic system with the 1999 presidential elections.<sup>6</sup>



**Map 2. EUAA visualisation based on publicly available information by Federal Government of Nigeria<sup>7</sup> and publicly available data on administrative boundaries sourced from the Office for the Surveyor General of the Federation of Nigeria (OSGOF), Ehealth, United Nations Cartographic Section (UNCS) on UN OCHA and The Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX).<sup>8</sup> The visualisation has been generated using QGIS 3.44.<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, Nigeria Country Profile, 28 July 2023, [url](#); LSE blog, Navigating Nigerian Politics: Democratisation and Development, 23 April 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Remembering Nigeria's Biafra war that many prefer to forget 15 January 2020, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Nigeria, About Nigeria, States, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> OSGOF, UNCS, UN OCHA, HDX, n.d., latest modified 4 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> QGIS 3.44, n.d., [url](#)



Nigeria is a federal republic with three levels of government: federal, state, and local.<sup>10</sup> It is administratively divided into 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The 36 states and the FCT are grouped into six geopolitical regions:

- North-Central (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and the FCT)
- North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
- North-West (Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara)
- South-East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo)
- South-West (Lagos, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo)
- South-South (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers).<sup>11</sup>

The bicameral National Assembly in Nigeria is composed of the Senate, with 109 members, and the House of Representatives, with 360 members. All members are elected for four-year terms.<sup>12</sup> The president is limited to two four-year terms and is elected through a qualified majority vote.<sup>13</sup>

Although the local government system is constitutionally recognised, it remains largely under the administrative and financial control of state governments.<sup>14</sup> Each state has its own legislation. The basic functions of local government are outlined in the Constitution; however, states can expand these duties further through their own laws.<sup>15</sup> Key challenges at local government level include limited autonomy, irregular revenue allocation, corruption, and political interference. These issues have undermined service delivery, slowed decision-making, deepened societal divisions, and contributed to public dissatisfaction.<sup>16</sup> In July 2024, the Supreme Court affirmed the autonomy of Nigeria's 774 local governments, confirming their right to manage budgets without state interference.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2. Functioning of government and political situation

Nigeria's political landscape is partly dominated by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party, which holds control of the executive branch, maintains a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and governs most of the country's states<sup>18</sup> (20).<sup>19</sup>

In February 2023, Bola Tinubu won the presidential election with approximately 37 % of the national vote. Tinubu was formally inaugurated in May 2023. The election process was

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<sup>10</sup> Ata-Agboni, J. U. et al., Federalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment, January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>11</sup> UNFCCC, Nigeria's First Biennial Transparency Report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 26 December 2024, [url](#), p. 2; Nigeria, About Nigeria, States, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, The World Bank in Nigeria, last updated 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ata-Agboni, J. U. et al., Federalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment, January 2023, [url](#), pp. 23-25

<sup>15</sup> CLGF, Local Government System in Nigeria, 2019, [url](#), p. 161

<sup>16</sup> Ata-Agboni, J. U. et al., Federalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment, January 2023, [url](#), pp. 23-25

<sup>17</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> World Bank, The World Bank in Nigeria, last updated 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> APC, APC Elected Members (2023 – 2027), n.d., [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)





marked by widespread irregularities. Incidents of violence were reported at multiple polling stations, alongside serious allegations of vote buying, voter suppression, and both technical and procedural failures. These issues contributed to delays in poll openings and in the announcement of official results. Domestic and international election observers raised concerns regarding the conduct of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), citing poor performance and a lack of transparency. Public confidence in the electoral process was low, and voter turnout reached a historic low of 27 %.<sup>20</sup>

Elected officials in Nigeria are tasked with making and implementing policy, though their capacity to do so is often limited by factors such as corruption, political polarisation, and limited governmental control in areas affected by militant activity. Observers noted that the legislature frequently aligns with the executive branch and has not consistently acted as an independent check on executive authority.<sup>21</sup>

Since the late 2000s, Nigeria's regional influence has declined. Successive governments have experienced major domestic issues including political instability, economic downturns, and escalating security threats.<sup>22</sup> The Nigerian government has continued to face significant challenges in consolidating democratic governance and implementing reforms in a petroleum-dependent economy, amid persistent issues of corruption and criminality.<sup>23</sup> The government has taken steps to combat corruption, particularly in the oil and security sectors, though corruption remains widespread. Between May 2023 and May 2024, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) secured over 3 000 convictions and recovered millions of dollars. High-profile prosecutions in 2024 included those of former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello and former Central Bank Governor Godwin Emefiele.<sup>24</sup> Both trials were ongoing by the time of drafting this report.<sup>25</sup>

Although progress has been made in combating corruption, the phenomenon has remained a major barrier to Nigeria's development, undermining democracy, governance, and public trust. Efforts over the past 25 years have been uneven, hindered by politicisation, weak institutions, and double standards, leading to clientelism, impunity, and weak accountability.<sup>26</sup> Corruption is also reported as endemic in the petroleum industry.<sup>27</sup> In April 2024, President Tinubu dismissed the entire leadership of Nigeria's state-run oil company, the National Petroleum Company (NNPC). The restructuring is part of broader reforms aimed at addressing persistent corruption, political interference, and mismanagement in the oil sector. Despite past attempts at reform, the industry continues to face challenges undermining efficiency and public trust.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> International Crisis Group, Restoring Nigeria's Leadership for Regional Peace and Security, 11 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> LSE blog, Navigating Nigerian Politics: Democratisation and Development, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> Nigeria, EFCC, Yahaya Bello's Alleged N80.2bn Fraud: How N1.09bn Vanished from Kogi Government's Account in Three Days-Witness, 26 June 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, EFCC, Alleged N7.8bn Fraud: EFCC Arraigns Emefiele for Unlawful Possession of 753 Housing Units, 16 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Chatham House, Taking action against corruption in Nigeria – Summary, 18 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> France24, Nigerian president sacks board of state oil company, 2 April 2025, [url](#)





President Bola Tinubu has been facing growing criticism within the country for allegedly favouring individuals from his Yoruba ethnic group for top-level appointments. Although the constitution mandates regional representation in cabinet positions, traditionally, federal appointments have followed an informal practice of balancing ethnic and religious representation to ensure national cohesion. Since assuming office in May 2023, Tinubu has appointed Yorubas to all eight of the most influential positions in government, from financial to security institutions. This concentration has sparked criticism, especially from the north, where many feel marginalised. Defenders of the president argue that he is choosing the most qualified candidates, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>29</sup>

Nigeria has continued to experience ‘an unprecedented wave of overlapping crises,’ including widespread insecurity and significant social and economic challenges.<sup>30</sup> The North-West region has remained affected by persistent incidents of banditry and kidnappings, while the North-East continues to experience insurgent activities carried out by armed groups, like Boko Haram. In addition, the South-East is marked by ongoing separatist agitations, further contributing to national instability.<sup>31</sup> In the North-West, increasing incidents of farmer-herder violence, criminal activity, and the effects of climate change (such as flooding and drought) have further aggravated the situation. Similarly, in the North-Central region, including Benue State, intercommunal tensions over land and water resources, compounded by recurrent flooding, have continued to drive instability and humanitarian need.<sup>32</sup> For more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

The country has also continued to face a protracted humanitarian crisis, particularly affecting the North-East, North-Central, and North-West regions, with millions impacted over the past 13 years. In the North-East, conflict involving non-state armed groups and ongoing military operations has resulted in large-scale displacement and widespread human rights violations.<sup>33</sup>

Rising living costs, especially for fuel and food, combined with human-made and natural disasters, have impacted millions of Nigerians. Extreme events, including record floods, alongside protracted crises, have exacerbated food insecurity, displacement, child malnutrition, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation. Over 133 million Nigerians feel the impact of multidimensional poverty, the highest number recorded globally.<sup>34</sup> For more information see [3. Key socio-economic indicators](#).

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<sup>29</sup> BBC News, Could Nigeria's careful ethnic balancing act be under threat?, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>31</sup> World Bank, The World Bank in Nigeria, last updated 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> IOM, Nigeria Crisis Response, 2024-2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>33</sup> IOM, Nigeria Crisis Response, 2024-2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>34</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127





## 1.3. Demographics

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa<sup>35</sup> with an estimated population of 237 million.<sup>36</sup> The country is a culturally diverse and multi-ethnic federal state,<sup>37</sup> with a population comprising over 250 ethnic groups, each with distinct languages, cultures, religions, and beliefs. The main three ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the South-West, and the Igbo in the South-East. The Hausa and Fulani have largely integrated, with most members practising Islam; the urban Fulani intermarry and hold administrative roles in Hausa regions, while rural Fulani remain distinct and speak Fula. The Yoruba, predominantly farmers living in urban areas, maintain a structured chieftaincy system led by influential figures. The Igbo live in decentralised, democratic communities governed by councils of elders, with limited centralised authority. Other notable groups include the Ibibio and Edo in the South, and the Tiv and Nupe in the ethnically diverse Middle Belt (North-Central zone<sup>38</sup>).<sup>39</sup>

56.1 % of Nigeria's population identifies as Muslim, while 43.4 % identifies as Christian.<sup>40</sup> Other religious minorities include individuals practicing African traditional religions (8 %),<sup>41</sup> individuals with no religious affiliation, small communities of Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews. In general, Muslims predominantly reside in the northern regions of the country, whereas Christians are primarily concentrated in the south.<sup>42</sup> While religious and cultural diversity is a defining feature of Nigeria's social landscape, it has also been a source of longstanding tension, especially in areas where religious groups coexist or overlap.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> BBC News, Nigeria Country Profile, 28 July 2023, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, Freedom Of Religion And Belief In Nigeria: A Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>36</sup> Population figures are based on estimates and projections from World Population Prospects 2024 and Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2024 (UNFPA, Population Division). See UNFPA, State of the World Population Report 2025 'The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world', 16 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 139, 142

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, The World Bank in Nigeria, last updated 10 April 2025, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch Nigeria 2024 -2025, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> Ojewale, O., Violence is endemic in north central Nigeria: what communities are doing to cope, The Conversation, 23 June 2021, [url](#); The term 'Middle Belt' usually refers to the following States: Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau. Source: Oasdom, List of Middle Belt States in Nigeria, 1 June 2020, [url](#); But some would also add Adamawa and Taraba, as well as 'the southern parts of Kaduna State, Kebbi State, Bauchi State, Gombe State, Yobe State and Borno State. Source: Legit, List of Middle Belt states in Nigeria: which ones are they?, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, Nigeria – People, last updated 4 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>40</sup> Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020, 9 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 49, 56

<sup>41</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF–Recommended For Countries Of Particular Concern (Cpc), Nigeria, May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020, 9 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 49, 56, 113, 193

<sup>43</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, Freedom Of Religion And Belief In Nigeria: A Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 5





## 2. Human rights and treatment of specific profiles

### 2.1. General situation

Nigeria has ratified several of the core<sup>44</sup> international human rights treaties, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>45</sup> The country has also ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.<sup>46</sup> However, Nigeria has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty (CCPR-OP2-DP).<sup>47</sup>

The country has continued to face significant human rights challenges.<sup>48</sup> Despite constitutional safeguards, ongoing human and civil rights violations point to systemic deficiencies in rights protection. Main challenges include insecurity, limited access to justice, restrictions on freedom of expression, and discrimination against marginalised groups.<sup>49</sup> Women and Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals face ‘pervasive discrimination.’<sup>50</sup> Journalists, protesters, and government critics were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention.<sup>51</sup> Particularly, journalists who cover politically sensitive topics have been targeted by criminal defamation laws as well as frequent harassment and arrest.<sup>52</sup> Security forces frequently used excessive force in response to demonstrations, resulting in casualties.<sup>53</sup>

Insurgencies, kidnappings, and communal violence have continued<sup>54</sup> to threaten the basic rights of millions of Nigerians.<sup>55</sup> Crime (including cultism, rural banditry, kidnappings, and farmers-herders violence) represented a primary cause of violence.<sup>56</sup> While insurgency led by Boko Haram and related al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates was long seen as the most significant threat to the country’s stability, by early 2024 violence arising from banditry had

<sup>44</sup> UN OHCHR, The Core International Human Rights Instruments and their monitoring bodies, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> UN OHCHR, UN Treaty Body Database, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> UNTC, Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July 1951, Status at 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> UN OHCHR, UN Treaty Body Database, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>48</sup> AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Nigeria 2024, 29 April 2025, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>49</sup> PLAC, Nigeria Annual Human Rights Report 2024, December 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>50</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#); PLAC, Nigeria Annual Human Rights Report 2024, December 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>52</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); FIJ, Highlighting Monthly Attacks on Nigerian Journalists Since World Press Freedom 2024, 6 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Nigeria Watch, Fourteenth Report on Violence 2024, [url](#), pp. 8-12



become more lethal and widespread. Perpetrated by groups described as ‘highly fragmented’ and diverse in terms of their capabilities and degree of organisation,<sup>57</sup> banditry was reported in the country’s North-West<sup>58</sup> and North-Central zones,<sup>59</sup> as well as in Lagos and other areas of the South-West.<sup>60</sup> Banditry appeared in a variety of forms such as armed robbery, murder, rape, kidnapping,<sup>61</sup> cattle rustling, armed attacks, and raids targeting local communities.<sup>62</sup> For more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

Mob violence led to numerous deaths, with many victims tortured or killed following accusations of theft, witchcraft, or blasphemy. Only few of these incidents were investigated or prosecuted, indicating the authorities’ failure to prevent and respond to such violence.<sup>63</sup> Victims of Boko Haram, including abducted girls (some of whom remain in captivity), received limited access to justice and support.<sup>64</sup> Cases of abuses committed by security forces have been reported,<sup>65</sup> including extrajudicial killings, torture, and other violations by military and law enforcement agencies<sup>66</sup> (for more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#)).

Religious freedom is constitutionally protected.<sup>67</sup> According to Freedom House, the government, however, has reportedly carried out crackdowns against ‘religious groups that have questioned its authority.’<sup>68</sup> No other sources could be found to corroborate this information. Sources also indicated that local governments have been known to *de facto* endorse official religions in their territory, and placing limits on other religious activity.<sup>69</sup> For more information see [2.11 Christians in areas where they are a minority](#) and [2.12. Muslims in areas where they are a minority](#) .

Northern Nigeria operates under a dual justice system (see [2.18.1 Justice system](#) for more detailed information) in which the secular provisions of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution coexist with sharia law in 12 states.<sup>70</sup> Although sharia law had traditionally been applied in the region to matters of personal status and civil law, since 2000 its application was expanded to criminal

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<sup>57</sup> Wiehler, C. and Malefakis, M., Time to Make ‘Peace’ with the Bandits, CSS, April 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>58</sup> International Crisis Group, Restoring Nigeria’s Leadership for Regional Peace and Security, 11 December 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>59</sup> HumAngle, What Is The Real Cause Of Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt?, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>60</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria’s growing security crisis: 6 essential reads, 22 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> Badiora, A.I., Terror attacks and kidnappings spread in Nigeria: why Lagos could be a target, The Conversation, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria’s growing security crisis: 6 essential reads, 22 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#); AI, Nigeria: Escalation of mob violence emboldens impunity, 28 October 2024, [url](#); DW, How Nigeria can stop rising ‘jungle justice’, 14 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), Reports of extrajudicial killings, sexual violence setback to counter-insurgency operations, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Nigeria, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Nigeria, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 61



justice, raising significant human rights concerns.<sup>71</sup> The states where sharia law has been adopted as both civil and criminal law are: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.<sup>72</sup> This parallel legal framework has created ongoing tensions<sup>73</sup> between constitutional human rights protections and religious legal principles, particularly in cases involving alleged blasphemy.<sup>74</sup>

In a resolution adopted in February 2025, the European Parliament (EP) urged Nigerian authorities to abolish provisions on religious insults in criminal law as well as the death penalty, pointing out that these provisions are in violation of international law, Nigerian constitutional rights and human rights. The EP resolution also urged the country to combat false blasphemy accusations, mob violence, and bring perpetrators to justice.<sup>75</sup>

### 2.1.1. Blasphemy laws

Nigeria's blasphemy laws, particularly in Northern states under sharia jurisdiction, has remained a source of significant human rights violations<sup>76</sup> (see [2.18.1. Justice system](#) for more information on legal pluralism). The 1999 Nigerian Constitution<sup>77</sup> guarantees key fundamental rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion (Section 38), and freedom of expression (Section 39), allowing individuals to express their beliefs. Although the Constitution does not criminalise blasphemy,<sup>78</sup> it permits the application of sharia and traditional law courts for noncriminal proceedings at the state level – but it does not compel all citizens to abide by them.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, sharia law explicitly criminalises blasphemy. Particularly in Kano State,<sup>80</sup> Sharia Penal Code (Section 382) prescribes harsh penalties for blasphemy, including death sentence for insulting the Prophet Muhammad. This legal divergence has resulted in

<sup>71</sup> HRW, "Political Shari'a"? Human Rights and Islamic Law in Northern Nigeria, 21 September 2004, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> Guardian (The), Group demands removal of Sharia provisions from 1999 constitution, 9 June 2025, [url](#); West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 61; Guardian (The), Group demands removal of Sharia provisions from 1999 constitution, 9 June 2025, [url](#); West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>75</sup> EP, Human rights breaches in Türkiye, Nicaragua and Nigeria, 13 February 2025, [url](#); EP, European Parliament resolution of 13 February 2025 on continuing detention and risk of the death penalty for individuals in Nigeria charged with blasphemy, notably the case of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu (2025/2548(RSP)), 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> CFR, An Obnoxious Legislation, 22 January 2025, [url](#); BBC News, Nigerian atheist freed from prison but fears for his life, 8 January 2025, [url](#); Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 61; UN OHCHR, Nigeria: UN experts demand release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, 16 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 71

<sup>79</sup> USCIRF, Country Update Nigeria, August 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>80</sup> ECOWAS, ECOWAS Court Rules Nigerian Blasphemy Laws Violate International Human Rights Standards, 9 April 2025, [url](#), XIII (153.iii)



conflicting jurisdictional overlaps between secular and sharia courts in the aforementioned 12 states where sharia law is implemented.<sup>81</sup>

Nigerian authorities, in northern states,<sup>82</sup> have continued to imprison individuals accused of blasphemy and have frequently failed to act against perpetrators of violence related to blasphemy allegations.<sup>83</sup> In 2024, Mubarak Bala, a prominent Nigerian atheist, was released after over four years in prison for blasphemy accusations related to a 2020 Facebook post. Convicted under both sharia law and secular law in Kano, he had originally been sentenced to 24 years, later reduced on appeal. Following his release, Bala is reported to live in a safe house due to ongoing threats to his life.<sup>84</sup>

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, a 25-year-old musician, was sentenced to death by hanging in August 2020 on charges of blasphemy after posting a song on WhatsApp. His case remains unresolved, with an appeal submitted to Nigeria's Supreme Court in November 2022 still pending a hearing date.<sup>85</sup> In February 2025, the European Parliament passed a resolution urging Nigerian authorities to release Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, drop all charges, and ensure his rights and safety, along with the release of others facing blasphemy allegations. It notes that blasphemy laws, including those under sharia law in some northern states, violate international human rights obligations and Nigeria's Constitution.<sup>86</sup> In April 2025, a landmark ruling by the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) judged that the blasphemy provisions in Kano State law are inconsistent with Nigeria's regional and international human rights obligations, particularly with regard to freedom of expression. The case was filed by the Incorporated Trustees of Expression Now Human Rights Initiative, a Nigerian NGO which documented instances of individuals arbitrarily arrested, detained, or sentenced to death for allegedly blasphemous expressions. The case also detailed incidents of vigilante violence,<sup>87</sup> including mob killings of accused persons carried out with apparent impunity.<sup>88</sup>

Incidents of mob violence and vigilante justice related to alleged religious blasphemy in Northern Nigeria have been reported, with significant impacts on social stability, human rights, and the rule of law. The prevalence of vigilante justice in the region reportedly reflects

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<sup>81</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 71

<sup>82</sup> BBC News, Nigerian atheist freed from prison but fears for his life, 8 January 2025, [url](#); CFR, An Obnoxious Legislation, 22 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> USCIRF, Country Update Nigeria, August 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>84</sup> BBC News, Nigerian atheist freed from prison but fears for his life, 8 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> AI, Nigeria: Singer on death row denied medical care, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> EP, European Parliament resolution of 13 February 2025 on continuing detention and risk of the death penalty for individuals in Nigeria charged with blasphemy, notably the case of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu (2025/2548(RSP)), 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> Vigilante violence refers to unlawful acts by community-based security groups who take 'the law into their own hands', often carrying out extra-judicial killings, torture, or punishments without due process. See Guardian (the), How vigilante groups constitute danger to life despite role in security, 24 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> ECOWAS, ECOWAS Court Rules Nigerian Blasphemy Laws Violate International Human Rights Standards, 9 April 2025, [url](#)



widespread distrust of formal judicial institutions and a preference for swift, community-based resolution.<sup>89</sup>

## 2.1.2. Death penalty

In Nigeria, the death penalty is a ‘lawful punishment’ imposed nationwide,<sup>90</sup> including for offences that do not meet the threshold of ‘most serious crimes’ under international law. Although no executions have been carried out since 2016, courts across the country still regularly issue death sentences.<sup>91</sup> In 2023, Nigerian courts issued over 246 new death sentences, raising the total number of individuals on death row to more than 3 413.<sup>92</sup> According to a representative of the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS), as of 15 April 2024, Nigeria had a total of 3 504 inmates on death row, comprising 73 females and 3 431 males.<sup>93</sup>

In May 2024, the Nigerian Senate introduced a bill to increase the maximum penalty for drug trafficking, replacing life imprisonment with the death penalty. The proposed amendment, which has not yet become law,<sup>94</sup> was forwarded to the House of Representatives for further consideration. The bill faced opposition from various stakeholders, including some legislators, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) country representative, as well as activists and legal professionals.<sup>95</sup> Such proposal has reignited debate over the continued use of the death penalty in the country, with some authorities questioning the sustainability of retaining capital punishment. The Nigeria Correctional Service, for instance, raised concerns about the financial and logistical burden of maintaining over 3 500 death row inmates nationwide. Further, although legal provisions allow for commutation of sentences by governors or chief judges after extended incarceration, inconsistencies in application have left many inmates in legal limbo.<sup>96</sup>

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) has issued various resolutions urging States Parties to the African Charter – including Nigeria – to implement a *moratorium* on executions as a step towards abolishing the death penalty. Its most recent resolution was adopted in November 2024.<sup>97</sup> The EU and the UN have also called on Nigeria to impose a *moratorium* on the death penalty.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious blasphemy, jungle justice, and legal pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law, 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 61

<sup>90</sup> AI, Grave Health Concerns for Singer on Death Row, 17 February 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>91</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>92</sup> AI, Nigeria: Singer on death row denied medical care, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> Guardian (The), Long-term imprisonment as political compromise for death penalty, 12 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> Premium Times, Senate passes bill prescribing death sentence for drug traffickers, 9 May 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Nigeria’s Senate proposes death penalty for drug trafficking, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> Harm Reduction International, The Death Penalty For Drug Offences: Global Overview 2024, 12 March 2025, [url](#); AI, 2025 World Drug Day: UNODC and CND must take urgent action to end unlawful use of the death penalty for drug-related offences, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>96</sup> Guardian (The), Long-term imprisonment as political compromise for death penalty, 12 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>97</sup> AI, Urgent Action: Grave Health Concerns For Singer On Death Row, 17 February 2025, [url](#); ACHPR, Resolution on the United Nations General Assembly Biannual Vote Calling For a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty – ACHPR/Res.614 (LXXXI) 2024, 14 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> UN OHCHR, Nigeria: UN experts demand release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, 16 May 2024, [url](#); EP, European Parliament resolution of 13 February 2025 on continuing detention and risk of the death penalty for individuals in Nigeria charged with blasphemy, notably the case of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu (2025/2548(RSP)), 13 February 2025, [url](#)



### 2.1.3. Prison conditions and treatment of detainees

Detention conditions in Nigeria are described as ‘harsh’, with provisions for food, healthcare, and other basic needs failing to meet the minimum standards established by the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and other international guidelines.<sup>99</sup> In September 2024, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture conducted its second visit to Nigeria to evaluate the treatment of detainees. The Subcommittee inspected various locations, including detention centres for men, women, and children, police stations, criminal investigation departments, and facilities operated by agencies addressing drug and human trafficking. Their assessment described conditions in most detention facilities as ‘abysmal’. Additionally, Nigeria had not yet established a National Preventive Mechanism as required under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which Nigeria ratified in 2009. The Subcommittee called on Nigeria to urgently implement measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment, improve detention conditions - particularly in police stations and similar facilities - and enforce legal safeguards to end impunity for perpetrators of torture.<sup>100</sup> As of March 2025, Nigeria's 240 prisons hold approximately 77 800 inmates, with two-thirds awaiting trial.<sup>101</sup>

Over the past decade, Nigeria has experienced a pattern of prison jailbreaks, resulting in thousands of inmates escaping correctional facilities nationwide. A recent incident in March 2025, at Koton Karfe Medium Security Custodial Centre in Kogi State, saw 12 inmates escape, with only six recaptured. This marked the fourth jailbreak at this facility in 13 years, where nearly 700 inmates have fled, including about 100 freed during a 2012 Boko Haram attack. Some observers attribute the repeated jailbreaks to security gaps, together with possible insider complicity, which exacerbate the prisons’ vulnerabilities, especially amid attacks by armed groups like Boko Haram. They also point to systemic issues such as overcrowding, outdated infrastructure, poor inmate conditions, slow judicial processes, and widespread corruption.<sup>102</sup>

## 2.2. Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

### 2.2.1. Legal framework and prevalence

Nigeria ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2001.<sup>103</sup> The country also ratified several UN conventions on elimination of forced labour, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29) and the ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957

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<sup>99</sup> AI, Urgent Action: Grave Health Concerns For Singer On Death Row, 17 February 2025, [url](#); ACHPR, Resolution on the United Nations General Assembly Biannual Vote Calling For a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty – ACHPR/Res.614 (LXXXI) 2024, 14 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> UN OHCHR, Nigeria: Urgent measures needed to end torture and ill-treatment, says experts, 23 September 2024, [url](#); EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>101</sup> DW, What’s behind Nigeria’s increase in jailbreaks?, 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> DW, What’s behind Nigeria’s increase in jailbreaks?, 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> UNDOC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024, 11 December 2024, [url](#), p. 34



(No.105).<sup>104</sup> In 2003, Nigeria enacted its first anti-trafficking legislation with the passage of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, which was later amended in 2015. The Act also established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to enforce the law and coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking and related offences.<sup>105</sup> The current legislation covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol.<sup>106</sup>

Trafficking in human beings remains a persistent and serious humanitarian issue in Nigeria.<sup>107</sup> The country represents a major source, transit point, and destination for trafficked individuals.<sup>108</sup> Comprehensive data on THB in Nigeria relevant for the reference period of this report was not available among all sources consulted.<sup>109</sup> According to the latest available data from the 2023 Global Slavery Index,<sup>110</sup> an estimated 1.6 million people were living in modern slavery in Nigeria on any given day in 2021. This corresponds to a prevalence rate of 7.8 per 1 000 people. Within Africa, Nigeria ranks 5<sup>th</sup> out of 51 countries, and 38<sup>th</sup> out of 160 countries globally in terms of prevalence. Such an estimate does not account for children recruited into armed conflict by non-state armed groups such as Boko Haram.<sup>111</sup> In 2023, about 1.4 million Nigerians were subjected to forced labour or sexual exploitation, with many trafficked domestically or abroad, especially to Italy and Libya.<sup>112</sup>

## 2.2.2. Domestic and cross-border trafficking

Trafficking in human beings occurs internally within Nigeria as well as transnationally, with individuals taken from Nigeria to African and European countries.<sup>113</sup>

Domestically, traffickers predominantly recruit victims - often children and women - from rural areas in southern regions for sex trafficking, forced labour in cities,<sup>114</sup> and for the purpose of

<sup>104</sup> ILO, Nigeria Forced Labour Survey 2022, 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>105</sup> Amune, M. S., Control and Regulation of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: A Legal Framework Analysis, 13 January 2025, [url](#), p. 31; Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act N. 4, 2015, [url](#), Part II, 5

<sup>106</sup> UNDOC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024, 11 December 2024, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>107</sup> Ukhani, E. I. et al., The Role of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), in Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 174, 181; Punch, Harrowing tales of survivors trapped in the web of trafficking, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>108</sup> IOM, Final Evaluation Workshops Shed Light on Increased Support for Survivors of Trafficking in West Africa, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>109</sup> See Bibliography. For previous data see EUAA 2024 Nigeria Country Focus Report and 2021 EUAA Nigeria Trafficking in Human Beings Report.

<sup>110</sup> Walk Free Foundation uses the term 'modern slavery' to refer to different phenomena such as: 'forced labour, forced or servile marriage, debt bondage, forced commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, slavery-like practices, and the sale and exploitation of children'. Walk Free Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>111</sup> Walk Free Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 78

<sup>112</sup> IOM, Final Evaluation Workshops Shed Light on Increased Support for Survivors of Trafficking in West Africa, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> Lawal S. A. and Yekini, A., The Legal and Institutional Frameworks Aimed at Curbing Human Trafficking in Nigeria, 18 February 2025, [url](#), p. 2; IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>114</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)





the so-called ‘baby-factories’;<sup>115</sup> but victims can also originate from other regions.<sup>116</sup> Traffickers also exploit foreign nationals, including individuals originating from West and Central Africa (including Cabo Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Mali, and Senegal) and to a lesser extent, East and Southern Africa, in forced labour agriculture within Nigeria. Traffickers also operate in refugee and displacement settings, recruiting vulnerable Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees for exploitation across Nigeria and abroad.<sup>117</sup> In the North-East region, extremist groups like Boko Haram forcibly recruit, abduct, and exploit children and women as labourers, soldiers, or sex slaves.<sup>118</sup>

Organised trafficking networks, both international and domestic traffickers, transport Nigerian women and girls to other parts of Africa as well as to Europe, mainly for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, often using deception and coercion, including ritual oaths<sup>119</sup> (for more information see [2.2.3. Traffickers, recruitment and modus operandi](#) and [2.2.4. Women victims of trafficking](#)). Globally, Africa continues to be the continent with the highest rates of cross-border trafficking. Sub-Saharan African victims have been detected in multiple countries across the world, with primary concentrations within the region itself, as well as in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In recent years, the identification of Sub-Saharan African victims in Western and Southern Europe has declined, while detections in the Middle East have shown an upward trend.<sup>120</sup>

As per latest available data, the European Commission (EC) reported that Nigerians rank first among the top five nationalities of trafficking victims identified within the European Union. Most of the victims are women primarily trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.<sup>121</sup> Between 2017 and the first quarter of 2024,<sup>122</sup> the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) facilitated the voluntary return of 4 877 Nigerian victims of trafficking. Individuals were returned from 37 host or transit countries, mostly from Libya (54 %) and Mali (25 %). Of these, 86 % originated from the southern part of Nigeria, mostly from Lagos, Edo and Delta.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Guardian (The), HURIWA seeks emergency action on baby factories, child trafficking, 28 May 2025, [url](#); Vanguard, NAPTIP decries surge in baby factories, sale of children across Nigeria, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#);

<sup>118</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#); CTDC, Country Profile: Victims originating in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024, 11 December 2024, [url](#), p. 57

<sup>121</sup> EC, Report from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the progress made in the European Union in combating trafficking in human beings (Fifth Report), {SWD(2025) 4 final}, 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> IOM conducted an analysis of the profiles of Nigerian victims of trafficking based on data they collected from 2017 until Q1 2024 and derived from individuals assisted by the IOM, who have been identified as victims of trafficking. See IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>123</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 6, 7





### 2.2.3. Traffickers, recruitment and *modus operandi*

Many actors are involved in trafficking, including family and community members, or individuals in religious settings.<sup>124</sup> Organised criminal groups are among the main actors involved in trafficking of human beings in Nigeria.<sup>125</sup> In the context of migration routes, actors involved in migrant smuggling may also engage in trafficking, either by collaborating with trafficking networks or by directly exploiting migrants themselves.<sup>126</sup>

Trafficking networks exploit Nigerian victims in Europe, the Middle East (including the Gulf countries) mostly in sex trafficking and domestic servitude. Criminal groups, some linked to cults or confraternities (for more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#)), are highly structured and play a central role also in international trafficking.<sup>127</sup> Nigerian confraternities involved in sex trafficking, such as Black Axe, Supreme Viking Confraternity, Arobagi Vikings, the Maphite, and the Eiye syndicate, are becoming increasingly organised, violent, and sophisticated. These groups have expanded their networks, collaborating with European mafias and other organised criminal groups, and are shifting their focus towards a broader range of criminal activities, with human trafficking becoming less central to their operations.<sup>128</sup> Between April and July 2024, police units across 21 countries conducted a series of coordinated operations targeting the Black Axe, one of West Africa’s most notorious and secretive criminal networks involved in global trafficking, prostitution, and killing operations. The operation led to the arrest of 300 individuals.<sup>129</sup>

In January 2025, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) uncovered a sect in Kaduna State, Northwestern Nigeria, allegedly linked to trafficking in human beings’ activities. The group, known as ACHAD Life Mission International, is reported to promote the revival of African traditions and operates independently of any mainstream religion. Its leader, identified as Yokana, is based in Jos, Plateau State, an area recently classified as a human trafficking hotspot, particularly for cases involving the trafficking of children. According to authorities, more than 100 victims were rescued in Plateau State over the past year.<sup>130</sup>

Trafficking is often facilitated through personal and communal networks, and in some contexts, it is viewed not as exploitation but as a voluntary and viable path to economic and social advancement.<sup>131</sup> Especially in Edo State, trafficking victims are often familiar with their traffickers, who are typically part of their community and perceived as ‘sponsors’ offering

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<sup>124</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025; Punch, Harrowing tales of survivors trapped in the web of trafficking, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> UNODC, Chapter 2 – Trafficking in persons in and from Africa; a global responsibility, 2024, [url](#), p. 72

<sup>127</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>128</sup> INTERPOL, Sex trafficking in women in West and North Africa and towards Europe, June 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>129</sup> BBC News, World's police in technological arms race with Nigerian mafia, 28 August 2024, [url](#); Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Black Axe—Nigeria’s Most Notorious Transnational Criminal Organization, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> HumAngle, New Sect Linked to Human Trafficking Emerges in Nigeria, 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>131</sup> BBC News, Nigeria’s Miracle Baby Scammers – BBC Africa Eye Documentary [Online video], 25 November 2024, [url](#); Okorie, M. M., and Okeja, U., Prosecuting human traffickers in Nigeria: victim-witnessing and community-oriented challenges, 8 October 2024, [url](#), p. 9



assistance in traveling abroad.<sup>132</sup> Traffickers are often perceived not as criminals, but as business associates or migration agents, comparable to recruiters of professionals like doctors and nurses.<sup>133</sup> As explained by Roland Nwoha, director at IRARA Nigeria,<sup>134</sup> most people do not recognise the criminal nature of trafficking: ‘some victims even view traffickers as saviours, as people who have come to rescue them from harsh economic conditions.’<sup>135</sup> Most victims of trafficking who have been returned through IOM programmes from 2017 to the first quarter of 2024 reported to have been trafficked by their friend and acquaintance, while other reported having been trafficked by family members or relatives.<sup>136</sup>

Corruption and official complicity in trafficking<sup>137</sup> have remained widespread in Nigeria, undermining law enforcement and enabling impunity. Corrupt officials, security officers, and aid workers are reported to have committed sexual exploitation and trafficking crimes, particularly in IDP camps.<sup>138</sup>

Within trafficking networks, multiple actors play distinct and critical roles throughout the exploitation process. It often begins with an individual presenting a seemingly promising opportunity to vulnerable persons. These individuals are then connected to a central figure known as the ‘Connection Man’ or ‘Border,’ who coordinates the logistics of the trafficking operation. The ‘Connection Man’ arranges travel for the victims and connects them with overseas ‘Buyers’ who provide financial backing for the victims’ journey. ‘Buyers’, commonly referred to as ‘Madams’ or ‘Masters’, cover the travel expenses to reduce the amount owed to the ‘Connection Man’ upon the victims’ arrival. Once in the hands of the ‘Buyers’, victims may be resold or leased to ‘Users’ for various forms of exploitation.<sup>139</sup>

Sex trafficking networks operate through decentralised, specialised criminal groups involving various actors across all stages of the trafficking cycle, from recruitment to exploitation. Recruiters, including women and online agents, lure victims with false promises of jobs or education. Traditional religious figures, such as *juju* priests, perform oath ceremonies to control victims, while community leaders may issue threats. Family members may also be complicit, either through deception or financial gain. Fraudulent intermediaries and brokers in both rural and urban areas recruit victims under the pretence of legitimate opportunities. During transport, ‘movement facilitators’ use bribery to bypass law enforcement, while ‘escorting traffickers’ (also called ‘Trolleys’ or ‘Coyotes’) maintain physical control over victims. ‘Logisticians’ arrange travel, and ‘migrant smugglers’ (some of whom exploit or sell victims) support with the movement across borders. Corrupt officials may also enable transit in exchange for bribes or sexual acts. Recruitment methods continue to prey on victims’ hopes

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<sup>132</sup> Okorie, M. M., and Okeja, U., Prosecuting human traffickers in Nigeria: victim-witnessing and community-oriented challenges, 8 October 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>133</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>134</sup> IRARA Nigeria is an NGO with headquarters in Benin city (Edo State) that supports returnees by providing temporary accommodation and reintegration assistance. IRARA Nigeria is also an implementing partner of the Frontex Reintegration Programme. See IRARA, Reintegration, n.d., [url](#); IRARA Nigeria, Joint Reintegration Services, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>135</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>136</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 12

<sup>137</sup> INTERPOL, Sex trafficking in women in West and North Africa and towards Europe, June 2025, [url](#), pp. 13, 14

<sup>138</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>139</sup> Punch, Harrowing tales of survivors trapped in the web of trafficking, 14 July 2024, [url](#)



for a better life by offering fraudulent opportunities. These often include false promises of well-paid jobs abroad, such as in beauty parlours, shops, salons, or as waitresses, models, nurses, teachers, hairdressers, nannies, and receptionists, as well as false study programs and fake immigration offers to Europe, countries in the North African and Middle Eastern region, or the Americas. Deceptive tactics, such as fake marriage proposals, trick victims into willingly accepting these arrangements or coerce migrant women into prostitution under the pretence of repaying fabricated debts.<sup>140</sup>

IOM reported that the top five means of control traffickers use against Nigerian victims are physical abuse, deception, psychological abuse, threat, and withholding wages.<sup>141</sup> The role of *juju*<sup>142</sup> oath-taking in Nigerian trafficking networks has been well documented.<sup>143</sup> Traffickers use *juju* oath-taking as a means of control to keep victims obedient and bound to their captors. Before victims begin their journey abroad, traffickers often take them to shrines where they are forced to swear oaths. Belief holds that breaking the oath will result in severe consequences, including diseases, mental illness, and various forms of misfortune or harm. These oaths typically include promises to repay the traffickers for the cost of the journey and vows never to reveal the identities or whereabouts of their traffickers.<sup>144</sup> The *juju* ceremonies are typically conducted in Nigeria, but they also occur in Libya and Europe. In certain instances, the community's religious leader is responsible for both initiating contact with the victim and issuing threats.<sup>145</sup> Victims are usually trapped in debts, which may range from 20 000€ to 50 000€.<sup>146</sup>

In 2018, the Oba of Benin kingdom (Southern Nigeria), the traditional religious ruler who has moral authority over all *juju* priests in Edo State<sup>147</sup>, cursed human trafficking, as well as all priests who perform oaths between traffickers and their victims, and nullified all previous *juju* oaths sworn by trafficking victims.<sup>148</sup> As noted by scholar Dr Sarah Adeyinka<sup>149</sup> in an interview with the EUAA, the Oba of Benin's declaration was 'remarkable' and had ripple effects both in

<sup>140</sup> INTERPOL, Sex trafficking in women in West and North Africa and towards Europe, June 2025, [url](#), pp. 6, 13

<sup>141</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 12

<sup>142</sup> *Juju* is a term commonly used to describe the traditional spiritual practices of the Yoruba people. It is a belief system that involves the use of objects like amulets and the casting of spells, often associated with witchcraft. *Juju* is prevalent in West Africa, particularly among communities in Nigeria. See Counter Trafficking Network, Tutorial: Juju & Witchcraft, 2020, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>143</sup> EUAA, Nigeria Trafficking in Human Beings, April 2021, [url](#); Forced Migration Review, Trafficking, ritual oaths and criminal investigations, n.d., [url](#); Adeyinka, S. et al., The role of Juju rituals in human trafficking of Nigerians: A tool of enslavement, but also escape, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>144</sup> Adeyinka, S. et al., The role of Juju rituals in human trafficking of Nigerians: A tool of enslavement, but also escape, 22 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> INTERPOL, Sex trafficking in women in West and North Africa and towards Europe, June 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>146</sup> OCCRP, Nigeria Nabs Trafficking, Robbery Syndicate Leaders, 7 May 2025, [url](#); Belgium, MYRIA, Rapport annuel d'évaluation 2024 Traite et trafic des etres humains, [Annual Evaluation Report Human Trafficking 2024], 18 December 2024, [url](#), p. 98

<sup>147</sup> Edo state, in particular, Benin City has been the central hub for sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe for the last decades. See EUAA, Nigeria Trafficking in Human Beings, April 2021, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>148</sup> Reuters, Black magic ban dents sex trafficking in Nigeria, 19 September 2018, [url](#); TIME, An Ancient Curse Kept Nigerian Women Bound to Sex Slavery. Now, It's Been Reversed, 17 April 2018, [url](#)

<sup>149</sup> Dr Sarah Adeyinka is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Amsterdam, with extensive expertise on human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence research among people in situations of vulnerability, particularly refugees and asylum seekers. She is also the founder and board chair of CoCreate VZW (Belgium) and CoCreate Humanitarian Aid Foundation (Nigeria), NGOs that provide training and consultancy services to anti-trafficking organisations, caregivers, and first-line responders in Belgium and Nigeria. CoCreate also provides support victims of trafficking in partnership with organisations on ground in Nigeria and Italy.



Nigeria and abroad. Delivered in a culturally resonant manner and in local language, the declaration was actively used by law enforcement in EU countries in anti-trafficking efforts between 2018 and 2020. According to the same source, during this period, there were reports of trafficked women in Italy choosing to return to Nigeria, while within Nigeria some victims reportedly left their traffickers. Some traffickers themselves also contacted victims, urging them to break off ties, fearing consequences from the curse.<sup>150</sup>

Despite its initial impact, the influence of the Oba's declaration has diminished over time.<sup>151</sup> Also, some traffickers who do not originate from Edo State believed the Oba of Benin's 2018 curse did not apply to them. As a result, some have continued trafficking activities with little fear of spiritual consequences.<sup>152</sup> Dr Adeyinka stated that recruitment by traffickers has not stopped, noting that 'even though, reaching Italy has become very difficult, if not impossible, many are still recruited daily, unaware that common routes are blocked or of the journey's risks, often even without realising where they are going.'<sup>153</sup> The same source mentioned reports indicating that *juju* rituals and blood oaths continue to be used, reflecting the enduring role of traditional beliefs in trafficking practices. In addition, traffickers have also become more sophisticated in their tactics, for instance, increasingly turning to 'sextortion'. Before a victim travels, traffickers often force them to strip naked, record videos and threaten to release footage to their family or the public if the agreed costs are not repaid, intensifying the victim's fear and control.<sup>154</sup> The Director at IRARA Nigeria stated that there are signs of a gradual resurgence in previous trafficking patterns, with traffickers becoming increasingly bold, using familiar tactics such as deception and false promises.<sup>155</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Women victims of trafficking

Women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation throughout countries in Europe, including Austria, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Malta and Denmark.<sup>156</sup> Black Axe has been involved in the trafficking of Nigerian women for sex exploitation in Italy and France.<sup>157</sup> Organised crime networks also transport Nigerian women and girls to mining regions within Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire for sexual exploitation.<sup>158</sup>

Between 2017 and the first quarter of 2024, IOM facilitated the voluntary return of 4 877 Nigerian victims of trafficking; women and girls accounted for nearly 88 % of returnees across various age groups. In the first quarter of 2024, 167 victims were returned to Nigeria under the IOM programme, of whom 81 % were women and 19 % men. Of these 4 877 returned

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<sup>150</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>151</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025; Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>152</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>153</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>154</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>155</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>156</sup> EC, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the progress made in the European Union in combating trafficking in human beings (Fifth Report), 20 January 2025, [url](#); CoE, Fourth Evaluation Rounder Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking – Evaluation Report Austria, 11 March 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>157</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Black Axe—Nigeria's Most Notorious Transnational Criminal Organization, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>158</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#); CTDC, Country Profile: Victims originating in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)



individuals, 86 % were from the Southern part of Nigeria, mostly from Lagos (1 125), Edo (938), and Delta (425). These women were mostly subjected to sexual exploitation and forced labour. Without providing further details, IOM also pointed out that states such as Kano show a reverse pattern, with a higher number of male victims; however, the overall figures in these areas remain relatively low compared to other states.<sup>159</sup>

Domestically, traffickers recruit and force women, particularly from rural Southern regions into sex trafficking and forced labour into urban centres.<sup>160</sup> During the reference period, sources reported on a surge in the phenomenon of so-called ‘baby-factories’<sup>161</sup> - facilities disguised as orphanages, religious centres, maternity homes<sup>162</sup> or private medical clinics, where young women are lured, impregnated and held until they give birth to infants, who are then sold<sup>163</sup> and trafficked.<sup>164</sup> (For more information see [2.2.5. Children victims of trafficking](#)). Citing data issued by a local human rights association, media outlets reported that over 200 underground so-called ‘baby factories’ have been discovered and shut down by security agencies in the last five years; however new facilities have opened to replace the closed ones. The practice is especially prevalent in southern states such as Abia, Lagos, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo.<sup>165</sup>

Most of the victims of the so-called ‘baby-factories’ are minors,<sup>166</sup> teenage girls, unmarried young women.<sup>167</sup> Poverty, ignorance, dysfunctional family structures, social stigma on childlessness, and weak law enforcement are identified among the root causes of this phenomenon.<sup>168</sup> Traffickers often kidnap victims and keep them<sup>169</sup> against their will,<sup>170</sup> rape and force them to carry and deliver children.<sup>171</sup> Victims often receive money or something else for giving birth to a child.<sup>172</sup> In some cases, families facilitate the involvement of girls, while in other cases victims themselves engage voluntarily for financial reasons.<sup>173</sup> Some victims of so-called ‘baby-factories’ are recruited by traffickers through online platforms.<sup>174</sup> Behind this industry there is an ‘organised and highly coordinated commercial network of criminal

<sup>159</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4-7

<sup>160</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>161</sup> Guardian (The), HURIWA seeks emergency action on baby factories, child trafficking, 28 May 2025, [url](#);

Vanguard, NAPTIP decries surge in baby factories, sale of children across Nigeria, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>162</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#);

<sup>163</sup> DW, Why Nigeria’s ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); BBC News, ‘Pregnant’ for 15 months: Inside the ‘miracle’ fertility scam, 25 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>164</sup> Eziechine, A. O. and Esene. Q. O., Baby Factory Syndicate: An Emerging Trends of Trafficking in Agunloye’s Disposable Womb, June 2024, [url](#), p. 165

<sup>165</sup> DW, Why Nigeria’s ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), HURIWA seeks emergency action on baby factories, child trafficking, 28 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>166</sup> Vanguard, NAPTIP decries surge in baby factories, sale of children across Nigeria, 20 May 2024, [url](#); DW, Why Nigeria’s ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); BBC News, ‘Pregnant’ for 15 months: Inside the ‘miracle’ fertility scam, 25 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>167</sup> Eziechine, A. O. and Esene. Q. O., Baby Factory Syndicate: An Emerging Trends of Trafficking in Agunloye’s Disposable Womb, June 2024, [url](#), p. 166

<sup>168</sup> Guardian (The), HURIWA seeks emergency action on baby factories, child trafficking, 28 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>169</sup> Cable (The), NAPTIP rescues ‘nine pregnant women’ from Abuja baby factory, 23 January 2025, [url](#); USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>170</sup> DW, Why Nigeria’s ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); BBC News, ‘Pregnant’ for 15 months: Inside the ‘miracle’ fertility scam, 25 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>171</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>172</sup> Adegbite, A., Baby-Making Factories in Nigeria: A ‘Crime’ Begging for Legal Identity?, 14 June 2024, [url](#), p. 71

<sup>173</sup> BBC, Nigeria’s Miracle Baby Scammers – BBC Africa Eye Documentary [Online video], 25 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> Cable (The), NAPTIP rescues ‘nine pregnant women’ from Abuja baby factory, 23 January 2025, [url](#)



activities'.<sup>175</sup> Various raids were conducted during 2024<sup>176</sup> and 2025, uncovering so-called 'baby factories' and trafficking syndicates across the country.<sup>177</sup> A thriving market exists for infants among couples experiencing difficulties with childbearing. These individuals are often willing to pay between 1 million naira (576 EUR) and 2 million naira (1 152 EUR) to acquire a baby. Demand is generally higher for male infants, who are typically sold at a higher price compared to female infants.<sup>178</sup>

In general, young women victims of trafficking in Nigeria – as in other African countries - are recruited into sex work through forced abduction, by pressure from their parents and through deceptive agreements between their parents and traffickers, including 'unrecognized representatives' of criminal groups. In some cases, Nigerian women victims of trafficking often do not see themselves as victims. Some actively seek out traffickers or are introduced by relatives or friends in pursuit of economic opportunity. Poverty, conflict, poor education, social pressure and cultural norms are key factors that make women vulnerable to traffickers.<sup>179</sup>

### 2.2.5. Children victims of trafficking

An 'alarming prevalence' of child trafficking, abduction, and forced labour has been reported in Nigeria during the reference period.<sup>180</sup> According to NAPTIP, the average age of trafficked children in Nigeria is 15.<sup>181</sup> Children are exploited in activities like illegal mining,<sup>182</sup> domestic servitude, begging, street vending and forced labour in areas like textile manufacturing and agriculture.<sup>183</sup> Recruitment often occurs via criminal networks or trafficking groups that exploit vulnerable families, sometimes operating under the pretext of offering support or charitable assistance.<sup>184</sup> Children may also be abducted or unlawfully acquired, particularly from socio-economically disadvantage backgrounds, for purposes like illegal adoption or forced labour.<sup>185</sup> Within the phenomenon of so-called 'baby-factories', minor girls are exploited,<sup>186</sup> while infants are trafficked and sold<sup>187</sup> to infertile couples.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Eziechine, A. O. and Esene. Q. O., Baby Factory Syndicate: An Emerging Trends of Trafficking in Agunloye's Disposable Womb, June 2024, [url](#), p. 165

<sup>176</sup> PLAC, Nigeria Annual Human Rights Report 2024, December 2024, [url](#), p. 53

<sup>177</sup> Cable (The), NAPTIP rescues 'nine pregnant women' from Abuja baby factory, 23 January 2025, [url](#); Punch, Police bust Lagos baby factory, rescue 10 victims, 8 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>178</sup> DW, Why Nigeria's 'baby factories' continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>179</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 8

<sup>180</sup> PLAC, Nigeria Annual Human Rights Report 2024, December 2024, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>181</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 62

<sup>182</sup> AP, In Nigeria's lithium boom, many mines are illegal and children do much of the work, 12 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>183</sup> UNODC, Human trafficking, n.d., [url](#); USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>184</sup> OCCRP, Nigerian authorities Take Down Child Trafficking Syndicates, 23 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>185</sup> OCCRP, Nigerian Pastor Arrested in Major Child-Trafficking Bust, 13 Children Rescued, 7 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>186</sup> Vanguard, NAPTIP decries surge in baby factories, sale of children across Nigeria, 20 May 2024, [url](#); DW, Why Nigeria's 'baby factories' continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); BBC News, 'Pregnant' for 15 months: Inside the 'miracle' fertility scam, 25 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>187</sup> Guardian (The), HURIWA seeks emergency action on baby factories, child trafficking, 28 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>188</sup> Eziechine, A. O. and Esene. Q. O., Baby Factory Syndicate: An Emerging Trends of Trafficking in Agunloye's Disposable Womb, June 2024, [url](#), p. 166



Many children are being forced into street begging also by their Quranic school teachers<sup>189</sup> known as *mallams*. They exploit mostly boys from rural areas through forced labour in street begging and seasonal agricultural work, including across borders in Cameroon and Chad. These children often reside in unregulated, makeshift boarding facilities where they face unsanitary conditions, neglect, and exposure to disease. Reports also indicate cases of physical and sexual abuse by some *mallams* and older students. Observers note that rising poverty levels may be contributing to increased enrolment in these schools and heightened vulnerability to forced labour.<sup>190</sup>

In December 2024, law enforcement authorities dismantled a child trafficking syndicate led by Pastor Dayo Bernard of the End Time Army Ministry, based in the Jos-Bukuru area (in Jos LGA of Plateau State). During the operation, five children between the ages of 2 and 4 were rescued. According to police reports, the pastor allegedly used evangelism as a means to persuade parents to release their children under the false promise of educational sponsorship. He later confessed to abducting and selling a total of 13 children.<sup>191</sup> In January 2025, authorities rescued more than 200 children and dismantled several gangs and human trafficking networks as part of a series of nationwide operations focused on combating child exploitation.<sup>192</sup> Arrests of ‘armed bandits’ were carried out in Kogi, Katsina and Ondo states.<sup>193</sup>

The Chairperson of the Plateau State Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission attributed the increase in trafficking to ongoing insecurity, the rise in orphaned children, and the presence of IDP camps. She noted that some parents, due to lack of awareness, inadvertently hand over their children to traffickers posing as aid workers. A representative of the National Coordinator of the Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS), reported that children are typically sold for between 350 000 and 750 000 naira (about 195 Euros and 420 Euros).<sup>194</sup>

Armed groups, including Boko Haram, subject children to forced labour and sex slavery.<sup>195</sup> For more information see also [2.4. Children](#) and [2.10. Individuals targeted by Boko Haram](#).

## 2.2.6. Men victims of trafficking

Domestically, Nigerian men, including teenagers, are exploited in illegal mining<sup>196</sup> and forced labour.<sup>197</sup> In March 2025, Nigerian police arrested 130 people, including 113 foreign nationals, for alleged involvement in cyber-scams, like online casino and investment fraud. Nigerian authorities reported that some individuals working in these scam centres may also be victims of human trafficking, forced or coerced into criminal activities.<sup>198</sup> In April 2025, Nigerian

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<sup>189</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>190</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>191</sup> HumAngle, New Sect Linked to Human Trafficking Emerges in Nigeria, 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>192</sup> Nigeria Police Force, [Twitter], posted on: 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>193</sup> OCCRP, Nigerian Authorities Take Down Child Trafficking Syndicates, 23 January 2025, [url](#); Nigeria Police Force, [Twitter], posted on: 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>194</sup> HumAngle, New Sect Linked to Human Trafficking Emerges in Nigeria, 20 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>195</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the world 2025, Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>196</sup> Vanguard, How illegal miners wreak havoc on Nigeria – Investigation, 17 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>197</sup> ILO, Forced Labour in Nigeria - At a glance, April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> INTERPOL, More than 300 arrests as African countries clamp down on cyber threats, 24 March 2025, [url](#)



authorities repatriated 231 young Nigerians, mostly men, from Ghana who had been rescued from a human trafficking network involved in cybercrime. Ghanaian authorities uncovered 219 victims confined in 25 rooms within a residential estate in Accra, where they were allegedly forced to work under coercive and abusive conditions. Some victims showed signs of physical abuse, with reports of beatings and injuries linked to failure to meet financial targets. The trafficking ring had reportedly lured the victims with false job offers.<sup>199</sup>

In parts of Africa, including Nigeria, young aspiring footballers<sup>200</sup> often pursue international opportunities as a means of escaping poverty, unemployment, and political instability. Young men are approached by traffickers posing as agents or scouts who promise professional contracts with football clubs in Europe. Victims are requested to make a payment before their journey, only to discover they have been deceived and must take up low-paying jobs, including cleaning or hospitality, once overseas.<sup>201</sup>

Recruitment and trafficking of Nigerian men has continued, particularly into Libya for labour exploitation.<sup>202</sup> Nigerian men, especially from Edo State, are systematically exploited in Libya through forced labour, extortion, and even sexual violence. Driven by poverty, social pressure, and poor livelihoods, some Nigerian men become both victims and participants in the trafficking economy as some are drawn into smuggling activities as a survival strategy.<sup>203</sup>

## 2.2.7. Return and long-term reintegration of victims of trafficking

### Actors involved

Multiple actors - including government bodies, international organisations, and NGOs - are involved in the reintegration governance of Nigerian returnees. In 2019, the Nigerian government led the development of the Guidelines for Facilitating the Safe, Dignified and Voluntary Return, Readmission and Reintegration of Migrants in Nigeria Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), which entered implementation in 2020. The National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) is the designated agency responsible for coordinating reintegration efforts and for the implementation of the SOP. The SOP contains guidance for reintegration processes, in alignment with international legal standards, and is intended to enhance coordination among stakeholders involved in the reintegration of returnees.<sup>204</sup> These stakeholders include the Nigeria Immigration Service, which is tasked with documenting and processing returnees; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose diplomatic missions support the return of stranded migrants; and NAPTIP, which delivers rehabilitation support to returned victims of trafficking. NAPTIP also engages with regional and local authorities, international organisations, and community-based organisations

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<sup>199</sup> Punch, Over 200 trafficked Nigerians in Ghana to return Friday, 24 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>200</sup> Sports and Crime Briefing, Fake Agents Traffic Thousands of Players from Africa a Year – Super – Agent Speaks Out, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Info Migrants, Africa's young soccer players exploited, abandoned to their fate in Spain, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> New Lines Magazine, They Dreamed of Making It Big in Soccer. They Were Trafficked Instead, 9 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>202</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>203</sup> Chatham House, Tracing the 'continuum of violence' between Nigeria and Libya, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>204</sup> Adeyinka, S., & Kuschminder, K., Reintegration Governance in Nigeria. Reintegrate Project, University of Amsterdam, 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-4; Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025



in the implementation of the SOP. At the regional level, the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT) - which became the Edo State Migration Agency (EDMA) in 2024 - has played a leading role in reintegration governance.<sup>205</sup> Also, the Nigerian government collaborates with the Network of Civil Society Organisations Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour (NACTAL) to ensure referral of victims.<sup>206</sup>

As part of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, IOM provides support to Nigerian returnees, including returned victims of trafficking.<sup>207</sup> Since 2016, IOM has implemented the EU-IOM Joint initiative<sup>208</sup> for Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (MPRR-SSA) funded by the European Union (EU). Since October 2022, IOM has supported the voluntary return of over 20 970 Nigerian migrants under the MPRR-SSA,<sup>209</sup> primarily from Libya and Niger.<sup>210</sup> IOM also runs the Enhanced Reintegration Support for Survivors of Trafficking (ERS) project in Nigeria aiming at equipping survivors with business development skills, also offering them small business grants.<sup>211</sup>

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been critical partners in addressing and managing return migration in Nigeria. In Edo State, several NGOs operate as a network of CSOs to provide psycho-social support to victims of trafficking, legal assistance and counselling, advocacy, case reporting to the authorities, and community sensitisation.<sup>212</sup> Religious organisations also provide counselling and shelter services to trafficking victims for reintegration purposes.<sup>213</sup>

### Victim identification and access to support

As explained by Dr Sarah Adeyinka, in most cases, the modality of return determines the type of support that returned victims receive. This is largely because, in the case of EU-funded reintegration schemes, the available support and eligibility criteria are set by the donor. Individuals return to Nigeria through three main ways: forced return, self-funded or family-funded return, and assisted return through IOM's AVRR programmes. When people return through the AVRR, there is usually some form of reintegration support and assistance. This also means that returnees are officially registered, and both NCFRMI and NAPTIP are informed. When people return spontaneously, using their own or their family's money, they often come back through the same migration routes they used when leaving. In these cases,

<sup>205</sup> Adeyinka, S., & Kuschminder, K., Reintegration Governance in Nigeria. Reintegrate Project, University of Amsterdam, 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-4

<sup>206</sup> NACTAL, NACTAL participates in stakeholders meeting to discuss issues affecting the girl child in Nigeria, 24 September 2024, [url](#); NACTAL, Kwara NACTAL organized stakeholders' consultative meeting to combating human trafficking, 7 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>207</sup> IOM Nigeria, Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>208</sup> IOM, About the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> IOM, IOM Facilitates Voluntary Return of Stranded Migrants from Chad to Nigeria under EU-Funded Programme, 23 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> Adeyinka, S., & Kuschminder, K., Reintegration Governance in Nigeria. Reintegrate Project, University of Amsterdam, 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>211</sup> IOM, Reintegration and Empowerment: IOM Launches Reintegration Business Training for Human Trafficking Survivors in Nigeria, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> Uzomah, N. L. et al., Navigating the Complexities of Return Migration and Reintegration, 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>213</sup> Vatican News, Nigeria Conference of Women Religious against Human Trafficking commemorate Bahkita Day, 8 February 2025, [url](#); Our Sunday Visitor, Introducing the sisters who are rescuing victims of human trafficking in Nigeria, 17 April 2024, [url](#)



neither NAPTIP nor NCFRMI are aware that they are back in the country (or even left). As a result, ‘many victims of trafficking return completely under the radar.’<sup>214</sup>

NAPTIP reported to have rescued and received 6 162 trafficking victims from September 2021 until August 2024.<sup>215</sup> Between 2017 and the first quarter of 2024,<sup>216</sup> IOM facilitated the voluntary return of 4 877 Nigerian victims of trafficking, comprising 4 261 females (87 %) and 616 males (13 %). IOM informed that, in coordination with relevant government agencies, civil society organisations and non-governmental partners, they supported the reception and reintegration of these individuals upon their return, providing safe and secure shelter, family tracing and reunification services.<sup>217</sup>

Access to reintegration services for returnees is typically facilitated through various pathways. These include automatic referrals, when individuals are identified as survivors at border entry points; self-referral, when returnees independently seek assistance from NGOs, the Ministry of Women Affairs, or NAPTIP offices; community or family reporting, when relatives or community members alert NAPTIP; and referrals through IOM’s AVRR programmes.<sup>218</sup>

Victims who return through their own or family means may seek support from organisations but are often told they cannot be assisted because they did not return through an assisted programme. Reintegration assistance provided by the Federal Government through the NCFRMI is accessible to all returnees but remains very limited due to inadequate funding. Also, while NCFRMI, some churches, and NGOs - such as Media Coalition & Awareness to Halt Trafficking (MeCAHT) - offer help regardless of return modality, most returnees are unaware of this. After being turned away a few times, they assume no support is available. The same applies to those forcibly returned. Dr Adeyinka noted how, in such cases, the risk of re-trafficking increases, as traffickers may approach returnees offering help to return abroad. ‘This creates a cycle of vulnerability and allows human trafficking to continue and thrive.’<sup>219</sup>

According to Dr Adeyinka, despite ongoing efforts, gaps in victim identification persist. In some cases, even victims of trafficking returning to Nigeria through the IOM’s AVRR programme are not identified as victims upon arrival at the airport - and as a result, they receive no support at all. For her Reintegrate Study, Dr Adeyinka interviewed 69 returnees; 41 were victims of trafficking, but only four had been recognised by NAPTIP, while the remaining 39 victims - many of whom returned through the IOM scheme - arrived at the airport without being identified.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>215</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, Director-General’s Year Three Performance Report & Three Years Performance Overview, September 2023 – August 2024, 4 November 2024, [url](#), p. 47

<sup>216</sup> IOM conducted an analysis of the profiles of Nigerian victims of trafficking based on data collected by IOM from 2017 to Q1 2024. Most of this data is derived from individuals assisted by IOM, who have been identified as victims of trafficking. See IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>217</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 6, 7, 12

<sup>218</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>219</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>220</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025



## Shelter

NAPTIP operates 14 shelters across the country (in FCT, Lagos, Benin, Enugu, Sokoto, Uyo, Kano, Maiduguri, Osogbo, Ekiti, Yobe, Makurdi, Katsina, Ondo).<sup>221</sup> Services provided at the shelters include food, clothing, hygiene products, and basic educational courses. Victims in NAPTIP shelters are hosted for a maximum of six-week, and referred to NGOs-run shelters if longer stay is needed.<sup>222</sup> Usually, people may stay longer than six weeks, if they are under protection, or cooperate with NAPTIP to prosecute their traffickers.<sup>223</sup> As noted by Dr. Adeyinka, the number of trafficking victims exceeds the available shelter capacity. As a result, NAPTIP is struggling to accommodate everyone in need. The same source added that representatives of the Lagos State Neighbourhood Agency (LSNA) reported frequent interception of trafficking cases at the Nigeria-Benin border. A key challenge they face is the lack of accommodation for victims. Although referrals are made to NAPTIP, overcrowding often prevents intake. As a result, LSNA is left with the options of either sending victims home or placing them in police cells overnight, despite the victims not being criminals. Many choose to leave, increasing the risk of re-trafficking. When victims are intercepted by NAPTIP and their shelters are full, they are referred to verified NGOs for support. NAPTIP maintains collaboration with many NGOs and regularly makes referrals. For example, many victims are referred to MeCAHT in Abuja.<sup>224</sup> NAPTIP has a ‘closed shelter’ policy, meaning that individuals living at the shelter are not allowed to receive visitors or leave the premises freely.<sup>225</sup> Observers raised concerns about the restrictive shelter environment potentially re-traumatising victims and reported instances where victims and suspects were housed within the same compound due to space constraints.<sup>226</sup>

Besides NAPTIP shelters, there are other state-run shelters, including in Lagos State and in Benin City (Edo State). In Lagos State, there are also IOM and Lagos State-run ‘transit’ shelters, where individuals may stay for a certain period - depending on how long the evacuation process takes and when they plan to travel back to their state of origin.<sup>227</sup> Various NGOs and faith-based organisations also provide shelters for trafficking victims.<sup>228</sup> Most of the shelters available, whether run by civil society, government, or international partners, are female-only shelters. The only shelters for male returnees at country level are the Patriotic Citizens Initiative (PCI), located in Lagos and run by a civil society organisation (it can accommodate around 20 beneficiaries);<sup>229</sup> one operated by the NGO Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons (SEYP) in Benin city (Edo state) and another one run by Caritas Nigeria also based in Benin city.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, Director-General's Year Three Performance Report & Three Years Performance Overview, September 2023 – August 2024, 4 November 2024, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>222</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, Counselling & Rehabilitation Department, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>223</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>224</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>225</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025; USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>226</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>227</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>228</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>229</sup> Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>230</sup> SEYP, email communication with EUAA, 25 September 2025





Lack of funding, including for NAPTIP shelters, affects the ability of these shelters to operate effectively.<sup>231</sup> Roland Nwoha, director at IRARA Nigeria, noted that some shelters remain unused. Despite ongoing efforts by the operators to improve them – the source added – many of these shelters were not originally designed for trafficking victims and lack appropriate facilities, such as childcare, maternal care, or psychological support. Stigma also plays a role, as staying in a shelter can label individuals as trafficking victims. Additionally, strict rules, such as restricted movement and no visitors, discourage use, especially for returnees who experienced similar confinement abroad.<sup>232</sup> The same source informed that returnees within Frontex Reintegration projects<sup>233</sup> – of which IRARA is an implementing partner – are entitled to on-arrival support, which allows them to stay in a hotel for about five days while they plan their next steps. During this time, some choose to join friends or relatives, or return to their families if the environment is supportive. However, many prefer not to go back to their families due to stigma or a desire for independence. The hotel-stay gives them space to decide, while the NGO arranges long-term accommodation and activates the reintegration package to support them in renting a permanent place.<sup>234</sup>

### Effective reintegration

Nigerian returnee victims of trafficking face various obstacles to reintegrate, mainly due to financial pressures, challenges reconnecting with family, and stigma.<sup>235</sup> Women returnees especially experience significant reintegration challenges, including lack of family support, financial instability, and unemployment.<sup>236</sup> Women who return pregnant or with children may experience additional difficulties, including family rejection and economic hardship.<sup>237</sup> UN Women stated that promised reintegration support has often failed to materialise for returnees and widespread perceptions persist that institutions, including the United Nations, have failed to adequately support victims and survivors.<sup>238</sup> At the same time, IOM reported that, out of the total 4 261 trafficked victims they have assisted to return between 2017 and the first quarter of 2024, 3 122 (64 %) had been ‘completely reintegrated into the society’, 34 % remained in the process of reintegration, 2 % had the ‘reintegration deactivated’.<sup>239</sup>

Reintegration services for trafficking victims, including trainings, are primarily provided by under-resourced NGOs and faith-based organisations. These actors face significant capacity and access limitations, which hinder their ability to effectively address the scale of trafficking.<sup>240</sup> NGOs and international organisations offer varied reintegration trainings, such as

<sup>231</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>232</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>233</sup> IRARA Nigeria, Joint Reintegration Services, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>234</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>235</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), p. 10; Adewumi, S., Negotiating access and belonging, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 18-19; Uzomah, N. L. et al., Navigating the Complexities of Return Migration and Reintegration, 2024, [url](#), p. 15; Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>236</sup> Uzomah, N. L. et al., Navigating the Complexities of Return Migration and Reintegration, 2024, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>237</sup> IOM, Nigerian women defying stigma upon return, n.d, [url](#)

<sup>238</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>239</sup> IOM, Profile of Nigerian Victims of Human Trafficking since 2017, 31 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 6, 7, 12; EUAA did not receive further details and clarification from IOM on these topics.

<sup>240</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), p. 10





business or entrepreneurship skills development. As noted by Dr Adeyinka, while the training is a very good initiative, the financial barriers remain a major challenge. Participants often cannot afford transport or food during multi-week programmes, especially when reimbursements are delayed. NAPTIP provides live-in training options for individuals residing in its shelters, arranging transportation to and from the training location, while some NGOs provide daily allowances. However, most victims still face cost-related obstacles. The same source added that ‘even when reintegration support is provided, it can come with its own complications.’ For instance, a returnee might be helped by an EU-funded IOM programme or NCFRMI to set up a business, but instead of using the proceeds for themselves, some are forced to give the money to traffickers to finally be free of their debt. ‘So, they are left with nothing, forced to start from scratch again.’<sup>241</sup>

Limited availability of psychosocial and social support services in Nigeria poses a major challenge, especially given the severity of the psychosocial impact many victims have experienced. Psycho-social support training is often not covered by reintegration programmes, ‘reinforcing perceptions that it is less important than economic assistance.’<sup>242</sup> Some shelters have staff trained in psychological first aid and trauma counselling; however, Nigeria’s mental health system remains under-resourced. Training on disability inclusion varies across regions and NGOs, while access to specialised services - such as those for individuals with intellectual disabilities - is still relatively limited.<sup>243</sup>

### 2.2.8. Social attitude towards returnee victims of trafficking

Returnees often face stigma<sup>244</sup> from both family and the wider community, resulting in a hostile environment. In some cases, stigma is coupled with the financial burden of repaying debts, which can make safe resettlement in their home communities difficult or even impossible.<sup>245</sup>

Family attitudes towards returnees vary widely. Some welcome them with compassion and recognise them as victims of crime, particularly in more informed or urban settings. Others, however, reject or disown them to avoid communal shame, blaming them for leaving or for ‘bringing shame’ through experiences of rape or sexual exploitation. In some cases, returnees are sent away to live elsewhere.<sup>246</sup>

Male returnees - often trafficked for forced labour or petty crime - may face less sexual stigma than women but are still ridiculed as failures or criminals. Male survivors of sexual exploitation often remain silent due to extreme<sup>247</sup> and deep-rooted stigma and a lack of adequate support. Prevailing gender norms discourage men from expressing vulnerability or acknowledging trauma, resulting in many cases going unreported and unaddressed. The consequences of

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<sup>241</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>242</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>243</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>244</sup> Uzomah, N. L. et al., Navigating the Complexities of Return Migration and Reintegration, 2024, [url](#), p. 15; Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>245</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>246</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>247</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025



this neglect can be serious. There have been reports of male returnees taking their own lives, while others have been re-recruited into criminal activity, including robbery.<sup>248</sup>

Women face harsher stigma (especially around ‘sexual shaming, marriageability, and respectability), which often manifests as social shaming, gossip, and moral judgment directed at survivors. Many returnees from abroad are labelled as sex workers, viewed as having brought dishonour to their families, and are culturally excluded from being considered suitable for marriage.<sup>249</sup> Such stigma also negatively affects their access to employment.<sup>250</sup> In the Nigerian socio-cultural context, high expectations are placed on individuals living abroad. When returnees, especially women, fail to meet these expectations, they may face resentment, alienation, and even rejection from their families. These culturally driven expectations place added pressure on returnees, contributing to psychological trauma, hindering sense of belonging and their social reintegration.<sup>251</sup>

Dr Adeyinka noted that ‘there is persistent and culturally embedded stigma surrounding sex in Nigerian society.’ The academic reported that many trafficked women she interviewed were raped, got pregnant and returned to Nigeria with a baby, but they could not disclose that the child was conceived through rape, as the stigma attached to it could ruin both their lives. Instead, ‘they must constantly lie, saying the father is in Libya or has left them.’ Many victims fear that sharing such experiences could later be used against them during conflicts or disputes. The same source added that ‘this complex situation, where families may depend on returnees for support while simultaneously stigmatising them, shows the contradictory social dynamics surrounding reintegration.’<sup>252</sup>

Survivors must navigate both social rejection and strong cultural expectations around family loyalty. As explained by Dr Adeyinka, based on findings of her joint research study,<sup>253</sup> even after being trafficked by their own parents, victims continued to send financial support to those same family members. ‘This reflects a deeply ingrained cultural obligation to honour and support family, regardless of past harm.’ Even when returnees achieve financial success, the stigma may still persist. Individuals who return through forced means often come back empty-handed. In cases where families have taken loans to fund the migration or entered into financial agreements with traffickers, the return results in deeper economic hardship. The burden of repayment falls on the returnees, who are under pressure to find ways to repay debts, often without any resources or support.<sup>254</sup> The Director at Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON),<sup>255</sup> Morenike Omaiboje, informed that they documented cases in which four families had confined their returning relatives - either siblings or children - upon their arrival. In

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<sup>248</sup> Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>249</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>250</sup> Uzomah, N. L. et al., Navigating the Complexities of Return Migration and Reintegration, 2024, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>251</sup> Adewumi, S., Negotiating access and belonging, 8 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 18-20

<sup>252</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>253</sup> Derluyin I., et al., ChildMove: The impact of flight experiences on the psychological wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee minors, Ghent University, 2022, [url](#)

<sup>254</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>255</sup> The Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) is an NGO with headquarters in Lagos, providing support to women survivors of violence and trafficking, including returnees. See WOCON, About us, n.d., [url](#)



three other instances, particularly involving siblings, returnees were pressured to repay the money their relatives had contributed towards their initial departure.<sup>256</sup>

### 2.2.9. Re-trafficking

Nigeria does not have a centralised system that monitors long-term reintegration or provides ongoing follow-up for victims of trafficking. As such, there is no consistent way to track reintegration outcomes nationwide and understand how these might impact re-trafficking.<sup>257</sup>

Sources indicated that for most returnees, lack of adequate reintegration measures, economic hardship and social stigma are the primary factors contributing to vulnerability to re-trafficking.<sup>258</sup> In fact, returnees often find themselves back to the same conditions of poverty, deprivation, and conflict they initially sought to escape,<sup>259</sup> which make them vulnerable to re-exploitation.<sup>260</sup>

According to Roland Nwoha, Country Director at IRARA Nigeria, 'it's very common that returnees want to go back and very common that many of them are being re-trafficked.' The source said that the constant economic, emotional, and social pressure compounded with lack of support from family or community, and persistent stigma, often pushes returnees to consider re-migrating. Some try to leave on their own, while others reconnect with Madams. 'When they look back at the life they had in Europe - even if they were undocumented and lacked the freedom they desired - they still had access to decent shelter, regular meals, and sometimes stipends to support themselves and their children. For many, even living under those conditions feels more manageable than returning home to face daily struggles.' Those who return with children – the source added - face additional pressure, struggling to provide education, nutrition, and care while also trying to survive themselves. Nwoha informed that many returnees usually start out hopeful upon coming back, but once they are confronted with the realities - often within the first year – they feel overwhelmed, and many end up wanting to leave again. 'We have seen this happen with quite a number of returnees.'<sup>261</sup>

WOCON reported documenting over 100 cases of victims being re-trafficked after their return within the past five years. In some cases, women openly confess to the NGO their intention to leave again, while others ask to no longer be contacted. In many instances, the women give advance notice before cutting off communication. When no such warning is given and contact is lost, the organisation often assumes they have returned abroad.<sup>262</sup>

Out of the 69 returnees interviewed by Dr Adeyinka in 2024 for her research study, five had returned to Libya by 2025. When the academic met some of those still in Nigeria in April 2025, several mentioned they were considering going back, despite not wanting to, as they

<sup>256</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>257</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>258</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025; Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>259</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>260</sup> This Day, Bringing Trafficked Girls Back Not Enough, There Must Be Reintegration and Rehabilitation 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>261</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>262</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025





felt that returning offered at least some income to support their families. For most, the decision was not solely about themselves, but about providing for children, elderly parents, or other dependents. The same source stated to be aware of specific cases where traffickers contacted returned victims requesting them to provide a certain number of girls in exchange for payment for each girl ‘sent their way’ and adding that if the person wished to return abroad, they could facilitate that as well.<sup>263</sup>

There are also returnees who feel strongly they would never want to go back, having gone through very difficult experiences in Europe. As noted by Roland Nwoha, many in this group managed to save some money, secure decent accommodation, and return with some stability. For them, the reintegration package served more as a supplement to what they had already prepared. This group tends to include more older returnees. In contrast, younger returnees are often more desperate to go back, feeling restless and disillusioned with life at home.<sup>264</sup>

According to UN Women, despite significant progress has been made in raising awareness about trafficking for sexual exploitation and, to some extent, its links to forced labour and forced migration, a general sense of optimism about success abroad persists, often outweighing awareness of the associated risks. In Edo State, for instance, this is largely driven by returnees who display signs of financial prosperity, such as owning large homes and luxury vehicles. Their remittances have led to visible socio-economic improvements for previously disadvantaged families and communities. Individuals also frequently return with accounts of improved living standards and higher incomes abroad, reinforcing community belief in the benefits of migration and downplaying the associated risks. After returning, as time passes, the perception of danger and risk diminishes, and some returnees express a renewed desire to attempt the journey again. UN Women stated that there is evidence that many individuals in some African countries continue to raise funds to pay agents for migration and that many deported or forced returnees continue in the search for ‘green pastures’ in countries where prostitution is legal and lucrative, despite the risks.<sup>265</sup>

### **2.2.10. State response in combating THB**

Within the region, Nigeria is reported as the country that has taken most actions to improve the response to modern slavery in the past few years.<sup>266</sup> However, challenges in the effective enforcement of anti-trafficking laws persist, primarily due to severe underfunding of government agencies, lack of expertise in the monitoring, investigation, and victim support.<sup>267</sup> NAPTIP - the main agency responsible for combating human trafficking in Nigeria - collaborates with other law enforcement bodies, including the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Customs Service, various NGOs,<sup>268</sup> international agencies - such

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<sup>263</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>264</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>265</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>266</sup> Walk Free Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), pp. 76, 81

<sup>267</sup> Amune, M. S., Control and Regulation of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: A Legal Framework Analysis, 13 January 2025, [url](#), pp. 31-32

<sup>268</sup> Amune, M. S., Control and Regulation of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: A Legal Framework Analysis, 13 January 2025, [url](#), pp. 31-32





as IOM,<sup>269</sup> UNHCR,<sup>270</sup> INTERPOL,<sup>271</sup> as well as with EU-funded projects.<sup>272</sup> The agency reported ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking by strengthening its collaboration also with the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and other law enforcement bodies. Several raids and arrests of traffickers were carried out in 2024, including major operations in Kano<sup>273</sup> and Borno states,<sup>274</sup> and in 2025, leading to the rescue of several victims.<sup>275</sup> Some of the victims were intercepted at Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport.<sup>276</sup>

According to Roland Nwoha, NAPTIP tends to operate more reactively than proactively, often waiting for complaints before acting. Its effectiveness is further constrained by inadequate funding.<sup>277</sup> A senior representative at NCFRMI told the EUAA that, although funding is as a challenge in reintegration efforts, a broader issue lies in the lack of collaboration and the fragmentation of efforts across stakeholders.<sup>278</sup> Sources also indicated that corruption has hindered investigations and prosecutions of traffickers.<sup>279</sup> Director at WOCON noted that court proceedings are often slow, with few successful prosecutions. Access to justice and convictions remain major challenges, largely due to poor implementation and corruption, despite existing legal structures and a trained judiciary.<sup>280</sup>

These issues are further exacerbated by the reluctance of victims and their families to provide information about traffickers and their networks.<sup>281</sup> Dr Adeyinka explained that many victims are discouraged from reporting trafficking or engaging with law enforcement due to both practical and systemic challenges. The process is often perceived as overly complicated and inaccessible. 'Victims are frequently sent from one office to another, with no clear guidance. For instance, they may be told that their case does not qualify as trafficking, or they are redirected repeatedly without receiving support.' This endless referral cycle leads many to abandon the process altogether.<sup>282</sup> Similarly, the Director at WOCON observed that families often discourage returned victims from reporting or cooperating with prosecutions, preferring out-of-court settlements. This is also largely due to a prevailing culture of silence, driven by fear of stigma and community embarrassment.<sup>283</sup> There is also a 'widespread, though not always accurate, perception' that law enforcement will not act, with many victims believing police are corrupt and traffickers can buy influence. As a result, victims rarely report directly

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<sup>269</sup> IOM, Nigeria Crisis Response Plan 2024-2025, 17 December 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>270</sup> UNHCR, Where we work, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>271</sup> INTERPOL, How INTERPOL supports Nigeria to tackle international crime, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>272</sup> EMN, Trafficking in human beings – the international dimension, July 2025, [url](#), pp. 22, 32, 88

<sup>273</sup> Premium Times, Kano: NAPTIP rescues 285 victims, arrests 22 human traffickers in 2024, 9 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>274</sup> Daily Post, NAPTIP rescues 253 victims, obtained 9 convictions in 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>275</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, DIA Operatives Bust Transnational Organized Human Trafficking Syndicate in Nigeria: Arrest Three Suspects, Rescue 20 Foreign Victims, 13 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>276</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, NAPTIP blows hot! Scuttles Trafficking of Recruited Nigerians to Iraq; Intercepts 13 Victims at Naia, Abuja, 19 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>277</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>278</sup> Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>279</sup> ICIR, Corruption among law enforcement agencies slowing fight against human trafficking, NAPTIP says, 25 July 2024, [url](#); USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#); Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>280</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>281</sup> Amune, M. S., Control and Regulation of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: A Legal Framework Analysis, 13 January 2025, [url](#), pp. 31-32

<sup>282</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>283</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025



and typically engage the justice system through NGOs or NAPTIP, who often act on their behalf.<sup>284</sup>

Additionally, both victims and their families often fear retaliation from traffickers.<sup>285</sup> Roland Nwoha stated that ‘the fear of retaliation from traffickers is very real,’ especially for those who swore oaths of secrecy, through rituals performed by *juju* priests. These individuals live with constant fear, not just of physical harm but also of psychological and spiritual consequences. Many of them believe deeply in the power of these oaths and see the threats tied to them as real and dangerous.<sup>286</sup> Dr Adeyinka noted that although oath-taking plays a role (as victims are often forced to swear secrecy, reinforced by threats), fear goes beyond the oath. Traffickers often know where victims’ families live, raising concerns for their safety. In addition, fear is compounded by a lack of trust in law enforcement.<sup>287</sup> Particularly in Edo State, trafficking victims are often familiar with their traffickers, who may be part of the larger community where remittances continue to sustain families. In this context, victim-witnessing remains a significant challenge for Nigeria’s criminal justice system, as victims often perceive their exploiters as closely tied to their material wellbeing.<sup>288</sup>

As noted by the director at IRARA Nigeria, Roland Nwoha, the government, with international support, has made efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking. However, the approach remains largely ineffective, as many actors still rely on outdated, top-down methods developed without meaningful community input, resulting in limited local relevance and ownership. In Edo State, especially, the economy heavily relies on remittances, including money sent by trafficking victims, often earned through exploitation and invested locally. ‘This economic dependence makes it difficult to convince those benefiting, directly or indirectly, that trafficking is wrong and must stop.’<sup>289</sup>

A senior representative at NCFRMI told the EUAA that Nigeria takes the issue of human trafficking ‘very seriously’, with efforts undertaken to link international partners with national agencies and avoid a fragmented response.<sup>290</sup> The Nigerian government has prosecuted individuals involved in human trafficking, both in Nigeria and overseas. In its first mutual legal assistance case with a foreign government, Nigeria collaborated with Belgian authorities to prosecute a trafficker, who was sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment and fined for recruiting and exploiting Nigerian victims in Belgium.<sup>291</sup> NAPTIP reported that 190 convictions took place from January 2022 to August 2024, representing 27.94 % of total convictions for trafficking in human beings secured by NAPTIP in 21 years.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>285</sup> Amune, M. S., Control and Regulation of Human Trafficking in Nigeria: A Legal Framework Analysis, 13 January 2025, [url](#), pp. 31-32; Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025; Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025; Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>286</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>287</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025

<sup>288</sup> Okorie, M. M. and Okeja U., Prosecuting human traffickers in Nigeria: victim-witnessing and community-oriented challenges, 8 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 12, 14

<sup>289</sup> Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025

<sup>290</sup> Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>291</sup> USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#); Premium Times, Nigerian woman jailed for trafficking 12 girls abroad for sexual exploitation, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>292</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, Director-General’s Year Three Performance Report & Three Years Performance Overview, September 2023 – August 2024, 4 November 2024, [url](#), p. 46



## 2.3. Women and girls

### 2.3.1. Legal and social status

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>293</sup> prohibits gender-based discrimination, and several laws have been enacted to promote the rights and improve the status of women.<sup>294</sup> Nigeria is a signatory to several international and regional treaties on gender equality and women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>295</sup> and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).<sup>296</sup> However, as of 2025, Nigeria has not yet incorporated the CEDAW into national law.<sup>297</sup> Despite legal commitments, Nigerian women have continued to face widespread discrimination in both law and practice.<sup>298</sup> Many existing legal frameworks either condone or fail to adequately address critical issues such as domestic violence and gender inequality. Discriminatory elements can be found in various legal sources, including the Labour Act, customary law, sharia law, and even within the Constitution.<sup>299</sup> Some of these legal provisions discriminate women with regards to nationality, citizenship, health, education, marital and parental rights, employment,<sup>300</sup> inheritance and property rights.<sup>301</sup>

Gender equality has remained a challenge in the country, with reports of widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including child marriage and prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).<sup>302</sup> Lack of effective implementation of legal provisions, insufficient public awareness, and cultural traditions are among the key obstacles for achieving progress.<sup>303</sup> Religion, tradition, and culture are frequently used to justify violations of

<sup>293</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>294</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>295</sup> UN OHCHR, Ratification Status for Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>296</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>297</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Nigeria, 26 March 2024, [url](#), paragraph 152.23; Alita, E. C. et al., The United Nations and the Pursuit of Gender Equality in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of CEDAW Implementation and Challenges, 12 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>298</sup> Njila, M. M., An analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Women Against Discriminatory Practices in Nigeria, 8 September 2024, [url](#), p. 82; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>299</sup> For instance, Chapter III, Section 26 of the Constitution limits a Nigerian woman's ability to confer citizenship on her foreign spouse. See Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#), Chapter III, Section 26; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>300</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>301</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>302</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World (country profiles), 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127; Initiative for Equal Rights, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), pp. 33-34

<sup>303</sup> Ayamba, I. et al., U. S., National Gender Policy in Nigeria: Uncovering the Core Issues, October 2024, [url](#), p. 89; Njila, M. M., An analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Women Against Discriminatory Practices in Nigeria, 8 September 2024, [url](#), p. 82



women's rights, particularly in areas such as education, marriage, inheritance, property ownership, and protection from gender-based violence and harmful practices.<sup>304</sup>

Nigerian women face widespread discrimination also in areas such as access to education, employment and political representation.<sup>305</sup> Levels of female participation in the labour force as well as in political and economic decision-making roles have remained low.<sup>306</sup> In 2024, only four women secured seats in the Senate and 14 in the House of Representatives. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported that women made up just 8 % of all candidates in the 2023 elections.<sup>307</sup> Women's representation in ministerial roles dropped from 17.6 % in 2024 to 8.8 % in 2025.<sup>308</sup>

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that, as of February 2025, about 8 million people in Nigeria, including 1.95 million women of reproductive age, were in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict, food insecurity, lack of sexual and reproductive health services, limited education.<sup>309</sup> Abortion is only legally permitted when the woman's life is at risk, leading many to seek unsafe, illegal procedures that often result in medical complications. Those who suffer such complications frequently lack access to adequate follow-up care.<sup>310</sup> Women and girls with disabilities face discrimination in accessing health, including sexual, reproductive health and maternal health.<sup>311</sup> For more information see [3.7 Healthcare](#).

### 2.3.2. Situation of unmarried, widowed, divorced women and women without support network

Within the phenomenon of so-called 'baby-factories', teenage girls or unmarried young women have been forced into sex-slavery and trafficked as 'baby-making machines' across the country.<sup>312</sup> For more information see [2.2.4. Women victims of trafficking](#).

A 2024 study indicated a high incidence of poverty among unemployed and unmarried women in North Central Nigeria, due to limited access to education and training, and difficulties supporting themselves.<sup>313</sup> The director of WOCON told the EUAA that single women often face severe barriers to accessing housing, employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Most belong to low-income backgrounds, have not attended school

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<sup>304</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>305</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>306</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 36; Conversation (The), Nigerian children don't imagine women as political leaders: what shapes their view 3 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>307</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>308</sup> WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>309</sup> UNFPA, Situation Report – Armed conflict in North-East Nigeria continues to place lives at risk, 5 February 2025, [url](#), p.1

<sup>310</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>311</sup> Nigeria Health Watch, Nigeria's Health System Must Eliminate Obstacles to Maternal Care for Women with Disabilities, 17 March 2025, [url](#); Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Full Report, May 2025, [url](#), pp. 49-50; BBC Media Action, Using radio drama to tackle attitudes towards family planning in Northern Nigeria, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>312</sup> Eziechine, A. O. and Esene, Q. O., Baby Factory Syndicate: An Emerging Trend of Trafficking in Angunloye's Disposable Womb, June 2024, [url](#), p. 166

<sup>313</sup> Marwa, Z. and Mainoma, H. M., Evaluating the incidence of poverty among unemployed and unmarried women in North Central Nigeria, February 2024, [url](#), p. 113



and have limited awareness of their rights or available support systems. There is also a clear urban-rural divide: in urban centres, even if people are unaware of their rights, they might still receive information or guidance from neighbours. In rural areas, by contrast, overall awareness is lower, and communities often lack such information or support. Further, single women who lack support network, including divorced women and victims of trafficking, are often perceived by society and even their families as ‘morally questionable’ or ‘loose.’ This perception leads to deep stigma and social exclusion.<sup>314</sup> Landlords often view single women as financially unreliable,<sup>315</sup> or assume they are sex workers.<sup>316</sup> For more information see [2.2.8. Social attitude towards returnee victims of trafficking.](#)

Divorced women face significant challenges due to limited economic independence and the stigma associated with being single. This combination often leaves them vulnerable to isolation, financial hardship, and emotional strain. As reported by the Guardian, ‘Nigerian society often views a woman who is no longer in her husband’s home as unworthy of marriage, regardless of the circumstances.’<sup>317</sup>

Widows may face abuse,<sup>318</sup> social exclusion, and accusations after their husbands’ deaths.<sup>319</sup> Deprived of spousal income, many descend into poverty and struggle to secure basic needs such as food and shelters.<sup>320</sup> Moreover, disposal of the estate in Nigeria is governed by customary law,<sup>321</sup> which often forbid widows from inheriting their late husband's assets.<sup>322</sup> This may leave them in extreme poverty, isolated from friends and family, and vulnerable to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Customs and traditions have continued to ‘encourage gender-based violence against widows’. Traditional leaders, church groups, and government agencies enable these abuses through inaction and a lack of political will, while victims’ silence further reinforced their vulnerability.<sup>323</sup> Widowhood cultural practices were described as ‘inhumane or unfair’. Examples included ‘shaving of hair including private parts, wearing only black clothing throughout the mourning period from six months to one year,

<sup>314</sup> Omaiwoje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>315</sup> Daily Trust, Stereotypes, Biases Women Face In Quest For Accommodation, 14 December 2024, [url](#); HumAngle, What It Costs to Rent a House As A Single Woman in Nigeria, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>316</sup> HumAngle, What It Costs to Rent a House As A Single Woman in Nigeria, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>317</sup> Guardian (The), Female Genital Mutilation: Action, not words, needed to end menace, 7 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>318</sup> Anuforo, P. et al., Influences of Widowhood Cultural Practices, Values, and Beliefs on the Health and Well-being of Nigerian Women: An Integrative Review, 6 October 2024, [url](#); Punch, Heartrending tales of vulnerable widows battling for survival amid soaring cost of living, 1 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>319</sup> Punch, Heartrending tales of vulnerable widows battling for survival amid soaring cost of living, 1 June 2024, [url](#); Uroko, F., ‘Plead the case of the widow’ (Isaiah 1:17): The stigma of widowhood in eastern Nigeria and the needed faith-based interventions, 7 November 2024, [url](#), p. 43

<sup>320</sup> This day, From Struggle to Strength: Nigerian Widows Find Hope, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>321</sup> Cooney, M., A legal appraisal of the Inheritance rights of women in Nigeria, October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>322</sup> Vivian, A. E., Challenges of Women Inheritance Rights Under the Act and the Various Customs in Nigeria, 18 January 2025, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>323</sup> Uroko, F., ‘Plead the case of the widow’ (Isaiah 1:17): The stigma of widowhood in eastern Nigeria and the needed faith-based interventions, 7 November 2024, [url](#), p. 43



isolation/alienation, drinking water used to bathe the corpse, levirate marriage,<sup>324</sup> dispossession from husband's property, and ritualised weeping<sup>325</sup>,<sup>326</sup>

### 2.3.3. Violence against women and girls

#### Legal framework

Domestic legal provisions criminalising some forms of violence against girl-child are contained in the Child's Rights Act of 2003, prohibiting child marriage, sexual abuse and exploitation, the use of children in criminal activities, child labour, and other forms of exploitation.<sup>327</sup> Southern states apply the Criminal Code,<sup>328</sup> while the Northern states rely on the Penal Code Act as their principal criminal legislation.<sup>329</sup> Although both codes address gender-based violence, they contain significant limitations,<sup>330</sup> including the exclusion of marital rape from criminal liability.<sup>331</sup> For instance, Section 55(1)(d) of the Penal Code<sup>332</sup> allows forms of domestic violence.<sup>333</sup> Further, under sharia law applied in the aforementioned 12 northern states, 'beating of the wife is not a crime so long that the beating does not inflict serious injury or grievous harmful.'<sup>334</sup>

In 2015, Nigeria enacted The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act,<sup>335</sup> which is described as the most comprehensive legislation addressing various forms of violence against

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<sup>324</sup> Levirate marriage is a custom or law requiring a widow to marry her deceased husband's brother or a close male relative to ensure the deceased's lineage and property continue. See Encyclopaedia Britannica, Levirate, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>325</sup> In some Yoruba communities, widows are expected to keep vigils and demonstrate intense sorrow through ritualised wailing and profuse crying; failure to do so is believed to risk mental illness or loss of entitlements. See Dijeh A. E. et al., Cultural Challenges of Widows and Widowers' Coping Strategies in SouthSouth Geo Political Zone, Nigeria, 2 February 2025, [url](#), p. 551

<sup>326</sup> Anuforo, P. et al., Influences of Widowhood Cultural Practices, Values, and Beliefs on the Health and Well-being of Nigerian Women: An Integrative Review, 6 October 2024, [url](#), p. 189

<sup>327</sup> Grace, O. T., and Tolulope, J. S., The legal framework for protecting the rights of the girl child in Nigeria: How effective?, 2024, [url](#), pp. 85-87; Nigeria, NHRC, Child Rights, n.d., [url](#); Nigeria, Child Right's Act, 2003, [url](#), Art. 21, 23, 28, 28, 31, 32, 33

<sup>328</sup> Nigeria, Criminal Code Act, 1 June 1916, [url](#), Section 1A. The Criminal Code applies in Nigeria's 17 southern states: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo.

<sup>329</sup> Nigeria, Act No. 25 of 1960, Penal Code (Northern State) Federal Provisions Act, 30 December 1960, [url](#), Section 3(1). The Penal Code applies in Nigeria's 19 northern states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau.

<sup>330</sup> Lawyard, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence: Legal Reforms Needed in Nigeria by Grace Sunday-Ayegba, 14 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>331</sup> Lawyard, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence: Legal Reforms Needed in Nigeria by Grace Sunday-Ayegba, 14 January 2025, [url](#); Al, "Help Us Build Our Lives": Girl Survivors of Boko Haram and Military Abuses in North-East Nigeria, 1 June 2024, [url](#), p. 20. Nigeria, Criminal Code Act, 1916, [url](#), sections 6, 357; Nigeria, Penal Code, section 281(1)

<sup>332</sup> Section 55(1)(d) of the Penal Code reads 'Nothing is an offence which does not amount to the infliction of child, pupil, grievous hurt upon a person and which is done-(d) by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife such husband and wife being subject to any customary law in which the correction is recognized as lawful'. Nigeria, Act No. 25 of 1960, Penal Code (Northern State) Federal Provisions Act, 30 December 1960, [url](#), Section 55(1)(d)

<sup>333</sup> Lawyard, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence: Legal Reforms Needed in Nigeria by Grace Sunday-Ayegba, 14 January 2025, [url](#); Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>334</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women's Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>335</sup> Nigeria, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP), 14 May 2015, [url](#)



women,<sup>336</sup> including domestic violence, rape, FGM/C and child marriage.<sup>337</sup> Kano state has not enacted the VAPP Act, while Ekiti and Lagos have enacted separate laws on SGBV. In Taraba State, the VAPP Act was passed by the Assembly but has not been assented.<sup>338</sup> In August 2024, a bill to repeal the VAPP Act 2015, advanced to its second reading in the Senate,<sup>339</sup> raising concerns and opposition from women rights' groups.<sup>340</sup> By the time this report was finalised, the proposed bill to repeal the Act was still pending. Implementation of the VAPP Act remains, however, uneven across states.<sup>341</sup> Obstacles to full implementation include lack of awareness, inadequate funding, weak legal enforcement,<sup>342</sup> social norms, poor coordination among authorities,<sup>343</sup> as well as inadequate protection for survivors and witnesses.<sup>344</sup>

## Prevalence

Women and girls in Nigeria from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds<sup>345</sup> have continued to be subjected to widespread sexual and gender-based violence,<sup>346</sup> including domestic, sexual violence, FGM/C and child marriage.<sup>347</sup> From January to May 2025, Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) documented 33 256 sexual and gender-based violence cases.<sup>348</sup> In 2025, a representative from NAPTIP stated that the agency had documented over 3 000 cases of violence against women in the FCT alone.<sup>349</sup> Women in conflict settings, and especially girls in conflict zones and IDPs camps,<sup>350</sup> face heightened vulnerability and violence.<sup>351</sup> In the first half of 2024, North-East Nigeria experienced a significant rise in gender-based violence, especially involving intimate partner violence, child sexual exploitation, and forced marriages. Risks of violence against women have been

<sup>336</sup> Lawyard, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence: Legal Reforms Needed in Nigeria by Grace Sunday-Ayegba, 14 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>337</sup> Nigeria, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP), 14 May 2015, [url](#), Part I

<sup>338</sup> Partners West Africa Nigeria, VAPP Tracker, accessed 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>339</sup> AI, The State of the World's Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#); Cable (The), Activist petitions senate on move to repeal VAPP Act, 15 September 2024, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>340</sup> Nigerian Tribune, Activists warn against repealing VAPP Act, call for amendment, 12 September 2024, [url](#); SOAWR, #MaputoAt22: Our Rights Are Non-Negotiable, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>341</sup> Invictus, Beyond Enactment – A data-driven survey report on the implementation of the VAPP Act (2015) and Related State Laws, 2025, [url](#), p. 5; Izevbizua, M. O. and Omoruyi, K. P., The Role of Government in Abolishing Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria: A Panacea for Gender-Based Violence, March 2024, [url](#), p. 228

<sup>342</sup> Invictus, Beyond Enactment – A data-driven survey report on the implementation of the VAPP Act (2015) and Related State Laws, 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>343</sup> Democracy Radio, 10 Years On, Nigeria's Anti-Violence Law Struggles to Deliver Justice, 31 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>344</sup> Ikuteyijo, O. et al., Stakeholders' engagement with law to address gender-based violence in Southwest Nigeria: a qualitative study using normalization process theory to explore implementation challenges, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>345</sup> PLAC, Nigeria Annual Human Rights Report 2024, December 2024, [url](#), p. 52

<sup>346</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>347</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 35; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); Initiative for Equal Rights, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), pp. 33-34

<sup>348</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, January 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 14 February 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, February 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 6 March 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, March 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 5 April 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC May 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 10 June 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC April 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, [url](#)

<sup>349</sup> Democracy Radio, 10 Years On, Nigeria's Anti-Violence Law Struggles to Deliver Justice, 31 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>350</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>351</sup> UNFPA, Situation Report – Armed conflict in North-East Nigeria continues to place lives at risk, 5 February 2025, [url](#), p. 1





exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, economic challenges, and the impact of flooding.<sup>352</sup> Similarly, between January and May 2025, violence against women remained one of the ‘key concerns’ identified by UNHCR across IDPs’ sites.<sup>353</sup> Further, the majority of women in Nigeria, (around 60 %), lacks the ability to make independent decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, increasing their risk of violence and exploitation.<sup>354</sup>

### **Access to support services and state response**

Shelters for women victims of violence are accessible, particularly in major cities such as Lagos and Abuja; however, their availability remains insufficient relative to the scale of need; also there is a significant lack of awareness about their existence.<sup>355</sup> In November 2024, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) reported that the government has increased resources to prevent and address different forms of violence against women.<sup>356</sup> As part of these efforts, several states have introduced 24-hour helplines and expanded the number of shelters for survivors of violence. These shelters provide emergency housing, legal assistance, and access to counselling and health services.<sup>357</sup> The Nigerian Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency reported that it was unable to meet the current level of demand.<sup>358</sup> In North-East Nigeria, women survivors face additional challenges in getting support due to lack of safe spaces, inadequate referral mechanisms, limited health infrastructure,<sup>359</sup> as well as access to legal assistance.<sup>360</sup>

While legal and institutional mechanisms for women victims of violence exist, their functioning and effectiveness remain limited. Challenges include systemic corruption, nepotism, and a lack of basic infrastructure. For example, contacting hotlines can take days due to poor network coverage, and access often depends on personal connections.<sup>361</sup> In North-East Nigeria, protection is often inadequate, with law enforcement unresponsive or overstretched due to limited resources or fear of reprisals.<sup>362</sup> The Nigerian Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency reported that significant gaps remain in the adequacy and timeliness of legal protection for victims and in holding offenders accountable.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>353</sup> CCCM Cluster and Nigeria Shelter Sector, Humanitarian Flash Appeal: CCCM, Shelter and NFI North-East Nigeria; January - May 2025, 21 May 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>354</sup> UNICEF, Unites to End Gender-Based Violence: 16 Days of Activism Highlights Urgent Call for Action, 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>355</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>356</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 67

<sup>357</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 64

<sup>358</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 63

<sup>359</sup> Humanitarian Action, Nigeria 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan – 3.9.1. Gender-Based Violence AoR, 22 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>360</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>361</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>362</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>363</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 63





## Domestic violence

Domestic violence against women and girls is a widespread phenomenon across Nigeria.<sup>364</sup> According to NHRC data, a total of 84 187 cases of domestic violence were reported between January and December 2024.<sup>365</sup> In the first quarter of 2025 (January to March), an additional 17 252 cases were recorded, followed by 6 135 cases in April and 3 361 in May.<sup>366</sup> Northern Nigeria has seen an ‘alarming rise’ in SGBV cases, with 73 % of cases in 2024 involving intimate partner violence, up from 57 % in 2023 and 63 % in 2022.<sup>367</sup> Among married or cohabiting victims, 98 % experienced abuse within the context of intimate partner violence - which is often seen as ‘a private matter’.<sup>368</sup> A study on help-seeking behaviours among 31 802 women across Nigeria found that 67.1 % did not seek help after experiencing intimate partner violence, with only 1.9 % turning to formal support, and most relying on informal sources like friends or family.<sup>369</sup> A 2024 study in Ogbomoso, Oyo State (South-West Nigeria) found that healthcare professionals had inadequate knowledge and attitudes towards victims of domestic violence, lacked referral resources to support them, and worked in hospitals without documented protocols for managing such cases.<sup>370</sup>

The NGO Femi(ni)cide Watch Platform (FWP) recorded 135 cases of femicides in 2024 and additional 70 cases as of 5 August 2025, with offenders predominantly being family members. The highest number of cases occurred in Delta, Lagos, and Ogun states.<sup>371</sup> Cases of domestic violence and femicides are however underreported, due to lack of trust in the system and limited inter-agency documentation.<sup>372</sup> Underreporting is further exacerbated by the absence of a legal framework specifically addressing femicide,<sup>373</sup> as well as the lack of a comprehensive national data system for tracking such cases.<sup>374</sup>

<sup>364</sup> Guardian (The), Activists call for state of emergency in Nigeria over gender-based violence, 25 February 2025, [url](#); Initiative for Equal Rights, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), pp. 33-34; Nigeria, NHRC, The Nexus of Climate Change and Human Rights in Nigeria: Assessing the Impact of the Climate Crisis on Vulnerable Communities and Strategies for Mitigation, 2023, [url](#), p. 47; CDD West Africa, The Rising Tide of Femicide in Nigeria: A Silent War Against Women, 9 April 2025, [url](#); HiiL, Justice Needs and Satisfaction in Nigeria 2025, 2025, [url](#), p. 78

<sup>365</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, January 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 14 February 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, February 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 6 March 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, March 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 5 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>366</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC 2024 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, 28 January 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC May 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 10 June 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC April 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, [url](#)

<sup>367</sup> Nigeria, GBV AoR Northeast Nigeria, Annual Report 2024, 21 March 2025, [url](#), pp. 8-9

<sup>368</sup> Mbachu, C. O. et al., Multigenerational attitudes to gender norms on intimate partner violence and the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>369</sup> Spencer, C. M. et al., Understanding Help-Seeking Behaviour Among Intimate Partner Violence Victims in Nigeria, July 2025, [url](#), p. 3176

<sup>370</sup> Olufemi A. et al., Knowledge and attitude of health care providers towards the identification and management of domestic violence victims, 26 April 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>371</sup> DOHS Foundation, DOHS Femicide Dashboard - Track Reports and Insights on Femicide in Nigeria in 2024, 20 June 2025, [url](#); DOHS Foundation, DOHS Femicide Dashboard – Track Reports and Insights on Femicide in Nigeria in 2025, 20 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>372</sup> Guardian (The), Activists call for state of emergency in Nigeria over gender-based violence, 25 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>373</sup> Chinoye, J. O., Why Nigeria Needs a Femicide Law, September 2024, [url](#), p.1; CDD West Africa, The Rising Tide of Femicide in Nigeria: A Silent War Against Women, 9 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>374</sup> Chinoye, J. O., Why Nigeria Needs a Femicide Law, September 2024, [url](#), p.1





A 30-bed government shelter (Eko Haven) for victims of domestic violence was opened in Lagos State in 2023.<sup>375</sup> Alongside government initiatives, some NGOs provide support to victims of domestic violence in the country.<sup>376</sup> For instance, in Abuja, the Safe Heaven Foundation provides sheltering and psychosocial support to victims of domestic violence.<sup>377</sup> Significant gaps are, however, reported in the support systems available for victims of domestic violence and their dependents, particularly in areas such as shelters, healthcare services, legal frameworks for child custody, and access to financial aid.<sup>378</sup>

## Sexual violence

According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), almost one in four Nigerian women aged 18-24 years have experienced sexual abuse before age 18.<sup>379</sup> NHRC recorded a total of 45 986 cases of sexual violence and 6 943 cases of rape between January and December 2024.<sup>380</sup> From January to March 2025, an additional 2 711 sexual violence cases and 409 rape cases were recorded. In April 2025, cases of sexual violence were 2 200 and cases of rape 11; in May 2025, additional 1 152 cases of sexual violence and 5 cases of rape were documented.<sup>381</sup> In North-East Nigeria, rape accounted for 17 % of the total SGBV incidents in 2024, marking a 5 % increase compared to 2023, with 2 % of sexual violence incidents being related to sexual slavery. The same source indicated that 14 % of reported cases involved child sexual abuse, with children accounting for approximately one in every five reported incidents.<sup>382</sup> Women and girls with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable, with 85.3 % facing increased risks of exploitation and sexual abuse.<sup>383</sup>

As noted by NAPTIP, a significant number of sexual assault cases go unreported due to victims' psychological and social barriers, including fear, shame, stigma, and the risk of being subjected to victim-blaming, which discourage them from reporting the incident.<sup>384</sup> Sources have also identified fear of reprisal and a lack of trust in the justice system as further factors that refrained victims from reporting such incidents.<sup>385</sup> Reported cases of sexual violence are

<sup>375</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 67; Nigeria, DSWA, Lagos opens Eko Haven; shelter for survivors of Domestic Violence, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>376</sup> Wagwula, P. M. et al., Strengthening Domestic Violence Prevention in Nigeria: A Call to Action, 16 January 2024, [url](#), p. 3; Nigerian NGO, NGOs Fighting Against Domestic Violence In Nigeria, 27 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>377</sup> Safe Haven Foundation, Services, n.d., [url](#); Nigeria, FMINO, Women Affairs Ministry Empowers Survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), 11 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>378</sup> Wagwula, P. M. et al., Strengthening Domestic Violence Prevention in Nigeria: A Call to Action, 16 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>379</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>380</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC 2024 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, 28 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>381</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, January 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 14 February 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, February 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 6 March 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, March 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 5 April 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC May 2025 Human Rights Dashboard, 10 June 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC April 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, [url](#)

<sup>382</sup> GBV Sub-Sector Nigeria, Annual Report 2024, 22 March 2025, [url](#), pp. 9-10

<sup>383</sup> UN OCHA, Nigeria Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, January 2025, [url](#), p. 37

<sup>384</sup> Nigeria, NAPTIP, National Guide for the Establishment and Management of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Nigeria, 25 August 2024, [url](#), p.1

<sup>385</sup> RFLD, Faced with the reality of gender-based sexual violence in Nigeria, RFLD has implemented practical strategies and concrete actions, 21 January 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), Wanted: Collective action against sexual violence, 5 March 2025, [url](#)





often hindered by weak prosecution, largely due to a lack of evidence,<sup>386</sup> gaps in the legal system and insufficient support services,<sup>387</sup> such as medical assistance and trauma counselling.<sup>388</sup> Furthermore, stigma and shame, often reinforced by family and community, discourage victims of sexual violence from seeking necessary post-assault healthcare.<sup>389</sup>

In 2021, NAP TIP established Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) which offer services for survivors of sexual violence, including counselling, medical, forensic, legal as well as psychosocial support.<sup>390</sup> As of October 2024, there were 47 SARC in Nigeria across 22 states.<sup>391</sup> The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development reported in November 2024 that the number of SARCs was insufficient, underfunded, and centres often lacked the personnel to function effectively. Government attention to shelters for victims remained inadequate.<sup>392</sup> Victims may also lack awareness about available services and ‘fear being identified as survivors’.<sup>393</sup> NGOs and Christian organisations operate shelters for victims of sexual violence, often in partnership with public institutions.<sup>394</sup>

### Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

With around 20 million individuals affected,<sup>395</sup> Nigeria has the largest number of women and girls who have undergone FGM/C within the West and Central African region.<sup>396</sup>

Comprehensive data on prevalence of FGM/C in Nigeria relevant for the reference period of this report could not be found among all sources consulted.<sup>397</sup> According to UNICEF, Nigeria has the third-highest prevalence of FGM worldwide, with the highest risk occurring during a girl’s first year of life.<sup>398</sup> A similar trend is reported by Plan International, indicating that although FGM/C prevalence among women aged 15–49 has declined in recent years in

<sup>386</sup> Nigeria, NAP TIP, National Guide for the Establishment and Management of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Nigeria, 25 August 2024, [url](#), p.1

<sup>387</sup> Guardian (The), Wanted: Collective action against sexual violence, 5 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>388</sup> Nigeria, NAP TIP, National Guide for the Establishment and Management of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Nigeria, 25 August 2024, [url](#), p.1

<sup>389</sup> Ogedegbe, A. et al., Barriers and facilitators to accessing post sexual-based violence health services among young women attending higher education institutions in Nigeria, 19 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>390</sup> Nigeria, NAP TIP, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 Annual Report 2021, 9 February 2023, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>391</sup> The 47 SARCs are as follows: Adamawa (3), Akwa Ibom (2), Anambra (1), Bayelsa (1), Borno (1), Cross River (4), Delta (3), Ebonyi (1), Edo (1), Ekiti (3), Enugu (2), FCT Abuja (2), Jigawa (1), Kaduna (4), Kano (1), Kebbi (1), Lagos (3), Niger (1), Ogun (2), Sokoto (1), Yobe (4), and Zamfara (1). See Her Story Your Story, Directory of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in Nigeria, October 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>392</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 64

<sup>393</sup> GBV Sub-Sector Nigeria, Annual Report 2024, 22 March 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>394</sup> WARIF, Social Welfare Services, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>395</sup> UNICEF, Unites to End Gender-Based Violence: 16 Days of Activism Highlights Urgent Call for Action, 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>396</sup> WHO, Female genital Mutilation and its medicalization, 9 May 2024, [url](#); UNFPA, Towards Zero Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices in West and Central Africa, June 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>397</sup> See Bibliography.

<sup>398</sup> UNICEF, Unites to End Gender-Based Violence: 16 Days of Activism Highlights Urgent Call for Action, 2 December 2024, [url](#)



Nigeria, rates among girls aged 0–14 have risen from 16.9 % to 19.2 % since 2013.<sup>399</sup> No additional sources could be found to cross-check this data.

FGM/C is most prevalent in the South-East and South-West regions, while the North-East records the lowest prevalence.<sup>400</sup> Historically, the practice has been more prevalent in rural areas (where more than half of Nigeria’s population resides), however, latest available data show a shifting trend. Among women aged 15–49, 24.2 % living in urban areas have undergone FGM/C, compared to 15.6 % in rural areas. However, for girls aged 0–14, the pattern appears to be reversing, with 21.1 % of those in rural areas affected, compared to 16.3 % in urban areas.<sup>401</sup> Cross-border practices of FGM/C are also common, with some families travelling with girls to neighbouring countries where the practice is still permitted.<sup>402</sup> When looking at total numbers, the most affected states are Lagos, Kaduna, Imo, Kano, and Oyo.<sup>403</sup> FGM/C occurs across all ethnic groups, with the highest prevalence among Yoruba (35 %) and lowest among Tiv and Igala women (1 % each).<sup>404</sup>

The most recent data from the 2021 Nigeria MICS show shifts in the distribution of FGM types compared to 2019. Type II (flesh removed) remains the most common form, but its prevalence has risen sharply from 41 % in 2019 to 73 % in 2021. Type I (nicking without flesh removal) has remained relatively stable, decreasing slightly from 10 % to 9.6 %. Type III (infibulation/sewn closed) increased from 6 % in 2019 to 8.6 % in 2021. In addition, the 2021 survey recorded 8.7 % of cases where the form of FGM could not be determined.<sup>405</sup>

FGM/C is traditionally performed by older community members, often women, who are assigned this role, or by traditional birth attendants.<sup>406</sup> Midwives, nurses, and doctors operating within communities also carry out the procedure.<sup>407</sup> Although traditional forms of FGM/C are legally banned, a ‘concerning trend’ of medicalisation has emerged, whereby the procedure is performed by healthcare providers in healthcare facilities, ‘perpetuating the practice under the guise of safety’.<sup>408</sup> According to estimates by UNFPA, 13 % of FGM/C cases in Nigeria were performed by health workers.<sup>409</sup> Similarly, Plan International reported that medical professional carried out the procedure on a quarter of the total number of victims in the country.<sup>410</sup> As noted by director of WOCON, Morenike Omaiboje, medicalisation of FGM/C has been going on for a long time in Nigeria and it represents a problematic issue since - *de facto* - it legitimises the practice, curbing efforts to eradicate it. The source added that Nigeria

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<sup>399</sup> Plan International, From Commitment to Action – Accelerating Efforts to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by 2030, February 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>400</sup> Nigeria, National Population Commission, Demographic and Health Survey 2018, October 2019, [url](#), p. 467

<sup>401</sup> FGMC Research Initiative, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>402</sup> WHO, Female genital Mutilation and its medicalization, 9 May 2024, [url](#); IPPF, More efforts needed to end Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria, 6 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>403</sup> FGMC Research Initiative, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>404</sup> Nigeria, National Population Commission, Demographic and Health Survey 2018, October 2019, [url](#), p. 507

<sup>405</sup> Nigeria, National Population Commission, Demographic and Health Survey 2018, October 2019, [url](#), p. 506; Nigeria, NBS, UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021, Survey Findings Report, August 2022, [url](#), p. 350

<sup>406</sup> UNFPA, Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions, February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>407</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>408</sup> Plan International, From Commitment to Action – Accelerating Efforts to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by 2030, February 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>409</sup> UNFPA, Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions, February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>410</sup> Plan International, From Commitment to Action – Accelerating Efforts to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by 2030, February 2025, [url](#), p. 2



has legal and policy frameworks against medicalised FGM/C and collaborates with the World Health Organization (WHO) and medical associations to enforce bans and raise awareness.<sup>411</sup>

The practice of FGM/C in Nigeria is driven by deep-rooted cultural, religious, and social norms<sup>412</sup> that view it as beneficial,<sup>413</sup> enhancing a woman's prospects for marriage<sup>414</sup> and reducing promiscuity.<sup>415</sup> The Director of WOCON explained that women and girls who refuse to undergo FGM/C often face considerable social stigma and pressure. In some cultural contexts, they may be labelled as 'unclean' or 'disobedient' and are subjected to insults, shaming, and accusations of bringing dishonour to their families or rejecting tradition. Uncut girls may be considered unsuitable for marriage and excluded from cultural rituals or peer groups. Families who choose not to subject their daughters to FGM/C also face various consequences. These include community pressure and accusations of abandoning tradition. Such refusals can result in family disputes, particularly with elders who insist on continuing the practice. Families may be ostracised or become targets of village gossip. In some cases, others may threaten to carry out the procedure themselves or coerce the girl into undergoing it. There may also be economic repercussions, such as the loss of bride price negotiations or weakened social alliances.<sup>416</sup> Traditional customs often take precedence over statutory provisions in many regions. Many victims of FGM/C experience intense pressure from family members and community groups to undergo the procedure, often without access to external support systems. In some cases, powerful individuals reportedly leverage their influence to hinder law enforcement efforts, leaving victims with little to no legal protection. Women continue to face coercion, especially from in-laws, to subject their daughters to FGM.<sup>417</sup> This coercion takes various forms, 'including physical assaults, threats, verbal harassment, and financial oppression, ultimately compelling most women to yield to the demands of their family members'.<sup>418</sup> Many of these incidents are not reported to the police, as most women fear that involving law enforcement against their husbands' families could put their marriages at risk. In the Nigerian context, such actions may lead to divorce, with serious psychological and social consequences for the women involved.<sup>419</sup>

NGOs indicated inadequate funding and insufficient capacity as major challenges to maintaining their anti-FGM initiatives.<sup>420</sup> In addition, institutional weaknesses, enforcement gaps, and a lack of resources and technical capacity among relevant government agencies continue to hinder efforts to eliminate the practice.<sup>421</sup> Despite the existence of strict laws, offences related to FGM/C (along with other forms of violence against women such as rape,

<sup>411</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>412</sup> EVA, Breaking the silence: Ending Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria, 6 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>413</sup> HumAngle, Female Genital Mutilation Still Prevalent In Parts of Northeastern Nigeria, 12 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>414</sup> Punch, FGM: Urgent actions needed to end the evil, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>415</sup> Punch, FGM: Urgent actions needed to end the evil, 13 March 2025, [url](#); Nigeria Health Watch, Zero Tolerance: Stopping FGM in Nigeria and Empowering Survivors, 8 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>416</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>417</sup> Punch, FGM: Urgent actions needed to end the evil, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

Punch, FGM: Urgent actions needed to end the evil, 13 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>418</sup> Punch, FGM: Urgent actions needed to end the evil, 13 March 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), Female Genital Mutilation: Action, not words, needed to end menace, 7 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>419</sup> Guardian (The), Female Genital Mutilation: Action, not words, needed to end menace, 7 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>420</sup> IPPF, More efforts needed to end Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria, 6 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>421</sup> Plan International, From Commitment to Action – Accelerating Efforts to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by 2030, February 2025, [url](#), p. 2





domestic violence, child marriage), remain widespread, with low rates of reporting and prosecution.<sup>422</sup> In an interview with EUAA, the director of WOCON stated that there are no shelters dedicated solely to FGM/C victims in Nigeria, but support services for victims of this practice are generally integrated into broader SGBV response systems.<sup>423</sup> On the other hand, a confidential source interviewed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2022 reported that the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has a shelter for victims of FGM in almost every state.<sup>424</sup> No other source could be found to corroborate this information.

### **Child and forced marriage**

In Nigeria, four in ten girls are married before the age of 18, placing the country third globally, with over 24 million child brides. Despite data indicating a decrease in national prevalence (from 44 % to 30 %) progress has been slow and inconsistent.<sup>425</sup> The North-West and North-East regions have the highest rates of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before the age of 18. Child marriage is particularly common among women from the Hausa ethnic group,<sup>426</sup> and more prevalent among girls from low-income families, especially those living in rural regions or having limited access to education.<sup>427</sup>

The main factors behind child marriage include poverty, restricted access to education, political and economic pressures, religion, and cultural traditions - such as marrying girls before puberty to safeguard their perceived virginity.<sup>428</sup> Security and instability have continued to influence the prevalence of child marriage in the North-East of Nigeria.<sup>429</sup> Boko Haram and other armed groups forced many women and girls into marriage.<sup>430</sup> In April 2024, Amnesty International reported that 82 of the 276 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in the 2014 Chibok attack remain in captivity and called on the Nigerian authorities to investigate the allegations that at least 20 of the women were subjected to forced marriage.<sup>431</sup> Within this context, child marriage is often used by families as a protective measure against abduction, sexual abuse,<sup>432</sup> and economic insecurity.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>423</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>424</sup> The Netherlands, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>425</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria Takes Bold Steps to End Child Marriage and Protect the Rights of Children, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>426</sup> Girls not Brides, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>427</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 9; UNICEF, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#), p. 1

<sup>428</sup> Girls not Brides, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>429</sup> Girls not Brides, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>430</sup> AI, "Help Us Build Our Lives": Girl Survivors of Boko Haram and Military Abuses in North-East Nigeria, 9 June 2024, [url](#); pp. 32, 36

<sup>431</sup> AI, Nigeria: Decade after Boko Haram attack on Chibok, 82 girls still in captivity, 14 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>432</sup> Girls not Brides, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>433</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 15





## Conflict-related violence

Conflict-related sexual violence has continued to severely impact women and girls in North-East Nigeria. Non-state armed groups have continued to abduct them, subjecting them to rape and sexual slavery as both a reward for fighters and a means of attracting new recruits. In some cases, families reportedly consented to forced marriages as a coping strategy to prevent abductions. Female-headed households and single women have been targeted and subjected to rape by former members of armed groups near displacement sites in Borno State.<sup>434</sup> Most incidents in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (Bay) States were linked to abductions and attacks by non-state armed groups, who used sexual violence as a tool of control, intimidation, or punishment, often forcing women and girls into marriage.<sup>435</sup> In 2024, over 900 cases of conflict-related gender-based violence were reported in the North-East, of which 65 % were children.<sup>436</sup>

Boko Haram has been responsible for serious violations of women's rights, including forced marriages and rape.<sup>437</sup> In 2024, Boko Haram militants abducted over 400 individuals, the majority of whom were women and children, during attacks on IDPs camp in Gamboru Ngala, Borno State.<sup>438</sup>

Also in 2024, in Sokoto State, some armed gunmen kidnapped 17 female students from the dormitory of an all-girls boarding school.<sup>439</sup> In a separate incident in Zamfara State, located in the country's Northwest, over 50 women and children were taken during a violent raid on the village of Kakin Dawa.<sup>440</sup>

Military personnel, along with other actors, have also subjected women and girls in IDP camps to sexual violence.<sup>441</sup> In the IDPs camps of Ngaranam, Ali Modu Sheriff, Bakassi, and Gubio in Borno State, harassment is the most reported SGBV issue, followed by denial of resources and sexual violence. Barriers such as stigma, lack of awareness, and poor accessibility, particularly affecting persons with disabilities, continued to hinder victims from accessing essential support services.<sup>442</sup>

In 2024, the Special Independent Investigative Panel on Human Rights Violations in Counter-Insurgency Operations in North-East Nigeria concluded its hearings on the 2022 Reuters' allegations against the Nigerian military.<sup>443</sup> According to Reuters' investigation, since at least 2013, the Nigerian military has carried out a secret, systematic, and illegal abortion program in

<sup>434</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General – Conflict-related Sexual Violence, 4 April 2024, [url](#), para. 90

<sup>435</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p.5

<sup>436</sup> PSNE, Protection Sector North-East Nigeria (PSNE) Annual Report 2024, 13 March 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>437</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>438</sup> AI, Nigeria: Authorities must ensure safe release and return of over 680 people abducted this week, 8 March 2024, [url](#); HRW, Daily Brief, 19 March 2024, [url](#); ISS, Nigeria's schoolchildren again targeted in mass abductions, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>439</sup> Al Jazeera, Why mass kidnappings still plague Nigeria a decade after Chibok abductions, 3 April 2024, [url](#); ISS, Nigeria's schoolchildren again targeted in mass abductions, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>440</sup> Reuters, Gunmen kidnap at least 50 in Nigeria's Zamfara state, residents and police say, 10 December 2024, [url](#); Daily Post, Gunmen attack Zamfara community, abduct over 50 women, girls, 9 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>441</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>442</sup> Nigeria, GBV Sub-Sector Nigeria, Annual Report 2024, 22 March 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>443</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, SIIP North East Concludes Hearing On Reuters Report, 21 March 2024, [url](#)



the country's North-East, resulting in the termination of at least 10 000 pregnancies among women and girls. Many of the victims had been kidnapped and raped by Islamist militants. Witnesses reported that those who resisted were beaten, held at gunpoint, or drugged to force compliance.<sup>444</sup> The human rights panel found no evidence to support the allegations reported by Reuters. The panel's investigation lasted 18 months and included 199 witness testimonies. However, the panel confirmed instances of human rights violations, including infanticide during a 2016 military operation in Borno State. Reuters stood by its reports, while some observers suggested further independent investigations might be necessary due to the complexities involved.<sup>445</sup>

## 2.4. Children

### 2.4.1. Legal and social status

Nigeria's Child Rights Act of 2003, aligned with international and regional child rights frameworks, is the main law protecting children's rights, development and well-being.<sup>446</sup> Although all 36 states have domesticated the Act, implementation has remained uneven nationwide.<sup>447</sup> Conflicting constitutional provisions and the partial adoption of the Child Rights Act by states applying Islamic law have impeded its full implementation.<sup>448</sup> Enforcement is further undermined by a shortage of trained personnel, particularly within law enforcement, and the absence of statutory limitation periods - meaning there is no defined timeframe for initiating legal proceedings. Additionally, limited public awareness prevents individuals from recognising and asserting their rights.<sup>449</sup>

Moreover, Nigeria's legal framework presents conflicting provisions regarding corporal punishment of children. While the Child's Rights Act prohibits it, the Criminal Code and the Penal Code continue to permit its use, both as a method of disciplining children and as a form of judicial punishment.<sup>450</sup> (See [2.18.1 Justice system](#) for more detailed information on legal pluralism). Nigeria has pledged to end corporal punishment in schools as part of new global commitments to tackle violence against children. The move was announced ahead of the first UN ministerial conference on the issue, amid growing concerns over the harmful effects of

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<sup>444</sup> Reuters, The Abortion Assault, 7 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>445</sup> VoA, Nigeria military, Reuters at odds over reports on alleged mass abortion program, 11 November 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Nigeria rights body finds 'no evidence' military conducted secret mass abortions, 10 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>446</sup> Raphael, C. V. et al., An examination of Nigeria's legal framework for the protection of children and their mental health, 6 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 24-25

<sup>447</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>448</sup> Vergili A., Failure of International Laws in Local Contexts: The Case of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria, 30 May 2025, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>449</sup> Raphael, C. V. et al., An examination of Nigeria's legal framework for the protection of children and their mental health, 6 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 29-30

<sup>450</sup> Nwambo, Z. D. and Ben-Eche, A., A Reassessment of Nigeria's Legal Framework Protecting Children's Rights to Dignity and Protection From Corporal Punishment, 2024, [url](#); End Corporal punishment, Corporal punishment of children in Nigeria, last updated August 2024, [url](#), pp. 3-5



corporal punishment. The pledge follows recent incidents,<sup>451</sup> including the death of a child in Nigeria after being flogged by a teacher.<sup>452</sup>

Children and adolescents aged 0-17 constitute nearly half of Nigeria's population, totalling approximately 105 million. The country has made significant progress in several areas, including improved birth registration rates, a reduction in child mortality, increased childhood immunisation coverage, reduced rates of FGM/C. However, persistent issues remain, such as high poverty rates, inadequate access to quality education, poor nutrition, elevated newborn mortality, and widespread violence affecting children.<sup>453</sup> In fact, sources report that cultural practices affecting children, such as child marriage and FGM/C,<sup>454</sup> forced labour,<sup>455</sup> trafficking and forced begging,<sup>456</sup> corporal punishment<sup>457</sup> and child witchcraft accusations<sup>458</sup> remain widespread across the country.<sup>459</sup>

## 2.4.2. Access to education

In 2024, more than 18 million children of primary and secondary school age were out of school. Significant regional disparities exist, as literacy rates reach 87 % in Lagos State but only 9.5 % in the North-West.<sup>460</sup> Girls begin dropping out of school by the age of 14 at higher rates than boys and are less likely to enter the workforce.<sup>461</sup> Child marriage, poverty, and gender bias remain major barriers to girls' education, particularly in northern Nigeria, where cultural norms and perceptions of low-quality schooling often lead families to prioritise early marriage over continued education.<sup>462</sup> Nigeria has over 24 million underage brides.<sup>463</sup> For more information see [Child and forced marriage](#).

Access to education in Nigeria is further hindered by child labour, as children engaged in work have lower school attendance rates compared to those not involved in labour. According to the Nigeria Child Labour Survey 2022 released in April 2024 by the National Bureau of

<sup>451</sup> Guardian (The), Eight countries pledge to ban corporal punishment in 'fundamental shift' for children, 7 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>452</sup> Cable (The), Ogun school shut as student dies after corporal punishment, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>453</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), pp. 4-10

<sup>454</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>455</sup> Nigeria, Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics and ILO, Nigeria Child Labour Survey 2022, 2024, [url](#), pp. x, xi

<sup>456</sup> UN Women, Assessment of national responses and strategies to combat and eliminate trafficking in persons and forced migration in Africa, January 2024, [url](#), p. 7; USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2024 – Nigeria, (covering April 2023 to March 2024), 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>457</sup> Nwambo, Z. D. and Ben-Eche, A., A Reassessment of Nigeria's Legal Framework Protecting Children's Rights to Dignity and Protection from Corporal Punishment, 2024, [url](#); HRF, Corporal Punishment: An abuse to the dignity of a child, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>458</sup> Wikki Times, Flashback: Some Reported Witchcraft Cases in Bauchi 2021-2025, 14 March 2025, [url](#); BBC News Pidgin, Di children wey dem beat and troway ontop allegation say dem be winch, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>459</sup> Anyogu, A. A., Legal protection of children in Nigeria: Examining the extant laws and policies, July 2024, [url](#), p. 61

<sup>460</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>461</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>462</sup> Nigeria, FMWASD, National Beijing +30 review, November 2024, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>463</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria Takes Bold Steps to End Child Marriage and Protect the Rights of Children, 16 February 2024, [url](#)





Statistics (NBS) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), four in ten Nigerian children (39.2 %) aged 5 to 17 are involved in child labour. The issue is most severe in rural areas (44.8 %). Most affected children work in own-use production, with over half exposed to workplace hazards.<sup>464</sup>

### 2.4.3. Violence against children

Conflict in North-East Nigeria has had a severe impact on children. The UN Security Council has documented six grave violations: recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, sexual violence including rape, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions, and the denial of humanitarian access. It further notes an increase in the number of verified violations during the current reporting period compared to the previous one.<sup>465</sup> After escaping Boko Haram, many children in Nigeria have been unlawfully detained by the military for months or years without charge, legal counsel, or contact with their families.<sup>466</sup> For more information see [2.13. Perceived Boko Haram members or supporters](#).

In February 2024, over 200 IDPs, mostly children, were reportedly abducted by armed groups in Borno State's Ngala Local Government Area.<sup>467</sup> In the North-West states of Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina, ongoing bandit attacks, school kidnappings, and widespread community violence have led to the closure of numerous schools, interrupted education, and displaced large numbers of children and educators.<sup>468</sup> For more information see [2.10. Individuals targeted by Boko Haram](#).

Local sources reported an increase in the recruitment of children by cult groups.<sup>469</sup> See [2.14. Individuals targeted by student cults](#).

In Southern states, such as Akwa Ibom State, hundreds of children are being accused of witchcraft, especially in the Oron LGA, where such beliefs are said to be still common.<sup>470</sup> For instance, in March 2024, in Alkaleri LGA in Bauchi State, a young boy was reportedly left blind following an attack that some members of the community linked to beliefs in witchcraft.<sup>471</sup> See [2.17. Individuals accused of witchcraft](#).

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<sup>464</sup> Nigeria, Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics and ILO, Nigeria Child Labour Survey 2022, 2024, [url](#), pp. x, xi

<sup>465</sup> UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 17 July 2024, [url](#), section III

<sup>466</sup> AI, Children and armed conflict, Submission to the UN High Commissioner for human rights for report on the rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts, 2025, [url](#), pp. 4-5

<sup>467</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); UN OCHA, Mr. Mohamed Malick Fall, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria: Statement on the reported abduction of scores of civilians in Ngala, Borno (6 March 2024), 6 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>468</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria - Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 15 May 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>469</sup> Nation, Teen killers on the prowl: Tragic rise of Nigeria's child cultists, 8 September 2024, [url](#); Punch, Rise of child cultists turning schools into battlefields (2), 16 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>470</sup> BBC News Pidgin, Di children wey dem beat and troway ontop allegation say dem be winch, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>471</sup> Wikki Times, Flashback: Some Reported Witchcraft Cases in Bauchi 2021-2025, 14 March 2025, [url](#)





## 2.5. LGBTIQ individuals

Nigerian laws criminalise same-sex relationships, prohibit same-sex marriages and the registration of LGBTIQ organisations.<sup>472</sup> Federal, state, customary or religious laws each contribute in different ways to the criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts.<sup>473</sup> The country experienced a rise in discriminatory laws and violent actions targeting individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>474</sup> Those found guilty of engaging in same-sex relationships can face up to 14 years in prison,<sup>475</sup> while 12 northern states still impose the death penalty for same-sex activity.<sup>476</sup> For instance, in May 2024, sources reported a sharia court in Bauchi state sentenced a man to death by stoning for engaging in homosexual acts.<sup>477</sup> Religious courts in these states have also sentenced people to flogging.<sup>478</sup>

Discrimination by both authorities and society towards LGBTIQ individuals is described as ‘pervasive’.<sup>479</sup> Police officers often carry out abuses against LGBTIQ individuals,<sup>480</sup> including arrests, extortion attempts, and discriminatory actions.<sup>481</sup> In 2024, the Initiative for Equal Rights (TIER)<sup>482</sup> documented 89 cases of extortion, 118 incidents of harassment and more than 20 unlawful detentions of LGBTIQ individuals by law enforcement officials.<sup>483</sup> Victims avoid reporting such incidents or do not seek help because of stigma, fear of being ‘outed in the course of investigations’,<sup>484</sup> ‘exploited by the police’,<sup>485</sup> or concern that law enforcement might target,<sup>486</sup> or prosecute them instead of their attacker.<sup>487</sup> In January 2025, the Nigeria Police Force issued a statement ordering the arrest of individuals in a viral video who had identified as LGBTIQ, framing their self-identification as a violation of laws against ‘unnatural offences’ and same-sex marriage.<sup>488</sup>

<sup>472</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>473</sup> ILGA Database, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>474</sup> EPRS, LGBTIQ+ in Africa, May 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>475</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>476</sup> EPRS, LGBTIQ+ in Africa, May 2025, [url](#), p.2; HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>477</sup> Daily Post, Sharia court sentenced Bauchi man to death by stoning for homosexuality, 11 May 2024, [url](#); Daily Trust, Bauchi Man To Die By Stoning For Engaging In Homosexuality, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>478</sup> ILGA Database, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>479</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>480</sup> Human Dignity Trust, Nigeria, 11 March 2025, [url](#); Context, LGBTQ+ Nigerians recount police abuses under ‘weaponised’ law, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>481</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>482</sup> The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) is a Nigerian-based organisation that promotes and protects the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Nigeria and West Africa and have various programs including mental health initiatives. See Mental Health and Human Rights Info, The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>483</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>484</sup> Context, LGBTQ+ Nigerians recount police abuses under ‘weaponised’ law, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>485</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>486</sup> Vjesti, Police extortion and violence against LGBTQ+ people in Nigeria, living in fear under homophobic law, 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>487</sup> Context, Job losses, rising attacks: 10 years of Nigeria’s anti-LGBTQ law, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>488</sup> Nigeria, Nigeria Police Force, Press Release, Unnatural offences, same sex marriage illegal in Nigeria, 25 January 2024, [url](#)



Widespread discrimination against sexual minorities in Nigeria persists.<sup>489</sup> Hate speech against LGBTIQ persons remains common. In June 2024, a disinformation campaign falsely claiming Nigeria had legalised same-sex relations under the EU-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific States) Samoa Agreement sparked a wave of hate speech against LGBTIQ individuals.<sup>490</sup> Religious and societal norms influence homophobia attitudes,<sup>491</sup> with religious institutions reportedly promoting homophobic messages.<sup>492</sup> LGBTIQ persons face frequent harassment by passerby, area boys and neighbourhood vigilante groups through hate speech, verbal abuse, physical and sexual assault, mob violence, and extortion'.<sup>493</sup> In some instances, LGBTIQ individuals face deadly violence.<sup>494</sup> In August 2024, Nigerian transgender TikTok star Ifeanyi Orazulike, known online as Abuja Area Mama, was found dead with signs of beating, months after alleging a stabbing by an unidentified person.<sup>495</sup> In July 2025, two students at a Kano boarding school were killed after being violently attacked by senior classmates who accused them of engaging in 'unnatural offences', a term often used to imply homosexuality.<sup>496</sup>

LGBTIQ individuals are also subjected to attacks - mostly by non-state actors - through a practice known as *Kito*.<sup>497</sup> Victims of such practice are lured via social media or dating apps into meetings only to be attacked, extorted, and assaulted, sometimes filmed for blackmail.<sup>498</sup> TIER reported 84 *Kito* incidents against LGBTIQ people across Nigeria in 2024.<sup>499</sup> However, actual figures on *Kito* incidents are likely much higher across Nigeria, especially among queer women, who face greater stigma for defying societal expectations around marriage and motherhood.<sup>500</sup>

LGBTIQ individuals are also facing discrimination when accessing private and public services,<sup>501</sup> including healthcare, justice, employment and housing.<sup>502</sup> In healthcare settings,

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<sup>489</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Alabi, O. J. and Adebisi, T., Navigating shadows: the lived experiences of sexual minorities in Nigeria, 10 May 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>490</sup> BBC News, Nigeria-EU deal sparks false claims over LGBT rights, 11 July 2024, [url](#); EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>491</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>492</sup> No Strings, Gay-obsessed Nigerian pastor calls homosexuality a propaganda, 20 February 2024, [url](#); Peace, A. E., A discursive attempt toward the political economy of homophobia in Nigeria, 12 November 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>493</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>494</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World (country profiles) 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>495</sup> CNN, Nigerian transgender TikTok star found dead, 9 August 2024, [url](#); VOA, Fear grips Nigeria's LGBTQ+ community after popular cross-dresser killed, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>496</sup> Tribune, Kano gov't to probe death of two students, 16 July 2025, [url](#); Daily Trust, Alleged Homosexuality: 11 Arrested Over Killing Of 2 Students in Kano School, 17 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>497</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 22. *Kito* is a term in Nigerian internet slang referring to an individual who pretends to be queer, typically on social media platforms or dating applications, with the intent of luring others into meeting in person. The encounter is not genuine but rather a scheme designed to extort money, inflict physical harm, or otherwise exploit the targeted individual. See Mail & Guardian, What it means to be a kitoed, 28 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>498</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>499</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>500</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>501</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>502</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 23; Alabi, O. J. and Adebisi, T., Navigating shadows: the lived experiences of sexual minorities in Nigeria, 10 May 2025, [url](#), p. 7



provider bias and legal barriers can result in denied or substandard care.<sup>503</sup> Transgender people, in particular, turn to self-prescription due to the lack of access to specialised medical support.<sup>504</sup> Gender-affirming care remains scarce due to criminalisation, discrimination<sup>505</sup> and stigma.<sup>506</sup> Practices to change a person's sexual orientation are reportedly common in Nigeria,<sup>507</sup> including medical and religious therapies.<sup>508</sup> TIER noted that family members may subject their LGBTIQ relatives to conversion practices, including forced confinement, starvation, torture, sexual assault, or 'talk therapy'.<sup>509</sup> Reports indicated that surgeries have occasionally been performed on intersex children without their consent.<sup>510</sup>

## 2.6. Journalists and media workers

Nigeria's media landscape is described as 'rich and diverse',<sup>511</sup> including both traditional and digital platforms.<sup>512</sup> In the 2025 World Press Freedom Index,<sup>513</sup> Nigeria ranked 122nd out of 180 countries (where 1 represents the highest level of press freedom and 180 the lowest), a ten-place decline from the previous year. Governmental interference in the news media remains 'significant', taking the form of pressure, harassment of journalists and outlets, and, in some cases, censorship. Despite the large number of media organisations, few are financially stable. Salary delays make journalists vulnerable to corruption, while politicians, businesses, and advertisers influence editorial content.<sup>514</sup>

The Nigerian Constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression and the press under Section 39.<sup>515</sup> Certain laws - such as the provision on defamation in the Penal Code<sup>516</sup> and the

<sup>503</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>504</sup> DNB Stories Africa, Surviving Nigeria as a transgender woman: Boma's experience, 21 May 2024, [url](#); ICIR, LGBTIQ+: walking the tightrope of social exclusion in Nigeria, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>505</sup> Folayan, M. O. et al., Socioeconomic inequality, health inequity and well-being of transgender people during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, 12 August 2023, [url](#).

<sup>506</sup> Afya na Haki, A Human Rights Framework for addressing barriers to Gender-Affirming Care for transgender and Gender Diverse Adults in Selected African Countries, 3 April 2025, [url](#), p. 28; Folayan, M. O. et al., Socioeconomic inequality, health inequity and well-being of transgender people during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>507</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>508</sup> CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); CHEVs and TIER, Rights Under Arrest, Impact of the SSMPA on LGBTQI+ Individuals and Organisations (A Decade of Resilience), 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>509</sup> TIER, 2024 Human Rights Violations Report, January 2025, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>510</sup> Outright International, Embracing Realities of Sex Development: Challenges and Achievements of Intersex Activism in Nigeria and Beyond, 28 October 2024, [url](#); RM Times, In Nigeria, Intersex Newborns Leave Parents in Dilemma Over Gender Choice, 6 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>511</sup> Reporters without Borders, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>512</sup> Reuters Institute, University of Oxford, Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024, 17th June 2024, [url](#), p. 160

<sup>513</sup> The purpose of the World Press Freedom Index is to compare the level of freedom enjoyed by journalists and media in 180 countries and territories. Source: RSF, Methodology used for compiling the World Press Freedom Index 2025, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>514</sup> Reporters without Borders, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>515</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#), Section 39

<sup>516</sup> Reporters without Borders, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); SERAP (Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project), 'End use of Cybercrime Act against journalists, release those in custody', SERAP, NGE tell Tinubu govt, others, 5 May 2025, [url](#)



2015 Cybercrime Act – have, however, been used to obstruct the work of journalists.<sup>517</sup> In February 2024, the 2015 Cybercrime Act was amended to narrow the definition of cyberstalking under Section 24,<sup>518</sup> a provision said to be frequently used to arrest journalists.<sup>519</sup> Although such amendment was defined as a ‘timid attempt to promote press freedom’, the legislation has continued to endanger investigative journalism,<sup>520</sup> as it retains heavy penalties<sup>521</sup> and vague wording.<sup>522</sup> According to the Nigeria Human Rights Commission, Section 24 in its current form has been applied arbitrarily against individuals for publishing or disseminating content on digital platforms.<sup>523</sup> From February 2024 to September 2024, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) reported that at least eight journalists were arrested, prosecuted, or detained under Nigeria’s 2015 Cybercrimes Act since the amendment.<sup>524</sup>

In 2024, authorities, citing national security concerns,<sup>525</sup> have intensified a crackdown on journalists and critical voices.<sup>526</sup> A local NGO - as reported by media sources – found that in 2024, security agencies, including the military and intelligence services were responsible for more attacks on journalists than any other actors. Between January and October 2024, 69 incidents targeting journalists were documented, and law enforcement or security agencies were accountable for 45 % of them.<sup>527</sup>

The International Press Institute (IPI) reported that the highest number of incidents occurred to journalists covering the 10-day #EndBadGovernance protests in August 2024.<sup>528</sup> (For more information on these protests see [2.7. Protesters](#)). Various sources documented arrests and physical attacks against journalists during the protests.<sup>529</sup> Media workers have been targeted by both law enforcement officers and unidentified assailants.<sup>530</sup> On 1 August 2024, hoodlums

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<sup>517</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, Protection of the Right to Freedom of Expression in Nigeria, 4 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>518</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); See: Section 24. Section 24(1) is amended by substituting for paragraphs (a) and (b) new paragraphs ‘(a)’ and ‘(b)’ – ‘(a) is pornographic; or (b) he knows to be false, for the purpose of causing a breakdown of law and order, posing a threat to life, or causing such message to be sent’. Source: Nigeria, Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) (Amendment) Act, 2024, 28 February 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>519</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 – Nigeria, 16 October 2024, [url](#); RSF, Nigeria: at least eight journalists prosecuted under cybercrime law despite new amendment, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>520</sup> Reporters without Borders, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>521</sup> RSF, Nigeria: at least eight journalists prosecuted under cybercrime law despite new amendment, 9 September 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 – Nigeria, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>522</sup> RSF, Nigeria: at least eight journalists prosecuted under cybercrime law despite new amendment, 9 September 2024, [url](#); SERAP, ‘End use of Cybercrime Act against journalists, release those in custody’, SERAP, NGE tell Tinubu govt, others, 5 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>523</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, Protection of the Right to Freedom of Expression in Nigeria, 4 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>524</sup> RSF, Nigeria: at least eight journalists prosecuted under cybercrime law despite new amendment, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>525</sup> IJNET, Citing ‘national security’, Nigerian authorities are cracking down on journalists, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>526</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>527</sup> Vanguard, Security agencies identified as major threats to media freedom in Nigeria, 17 December 2024, [url](#);

Premium Times, Security operatives behind attacks against journalists in 2024 – Report, 18 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>528</sup> IPI, 2024 IPI Africa monitoring annual round-up, 12 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>529</sup> CPJ, Nigerian security forces attack, arrest journalists covering protests, 6 August 2024, [url](#); RSF, Nigeria: RSF

sounds the alarm after journalists attacked and arrested while covering protests, 9 August 2024, [url](#); Premium

Times, REPORTER’S DIARY : How this police officer’s men attacked me on protest ground, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>530</sup> RSF, Nigeria: RSF sounds the alarm after journalists attacked and arrested while covering protests, 9 August 2024, [url](#)



attacked a ChannelsTV vehicle carrying around 11 journalists covering the protest in Kano.<sup>531</sup> In Abuja, despite wearing a press jacket, a Premium Times journalist was approached by police officers, who seized his phone, hit him on the head with a gun, and threw him into a police van, from which he was eventually released.<sup>532</sup> In Maiduguri, nine journalists working for Radio Ndarason Internationale, including its programme director and editor-in-chief, were arrested at the radio station after ‘reporting on the current protests throughout the country’,<sup>533</sup> and were released later the same day.<sup>534</sup> Between 31 July and 3 August 2024, at least 31 journalists were attacked across the country.<sup>535</sup>

Frequent arrests under the 2015 Cybercrimes Act for online activities have led to growing self-censorship.<sup>536</sup> Security agencies ‘intimidated journalists, including editors and media owners’,<sup>537</sup> particularly in response to coverage perceived as critical of the government.<sup>538</sup> For instance, in September 2024, Haruna Mohammed Salisu and Yawale Adamu, journalists for the WikkiTimes, faced charges of criminal defamation, injurious falsehood and mischief over a report alleging that a federal lawmaker and a businessman conspired to divert public funds.<sup>539</sup> Daniel Ojukwu, a journalist with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism who reported on corruption implicating senior Nigerian officials, was abducted by the Intelligence Response Team of the Inspector General of Police on 1 May 2024. Police only confirmed his detention on 3 May 2025, when he was accused of violating the 2015 Cybercrimes Act; he was released on 10 May 2024.<sup>540</sup> In September 2024, four journalists, editors, and publishers –Olurotimi Olawale, Precious Eze Chukwunonso, Rowland Olonishuwa, and Seun Odunlami– were arrested and later charged with violating sections 24(1)(b) and 27 of the 2015 Cybercrimes Act in connection with reports they had published concerning alleged fraud involving the Chief Executive Officer of Guaranty Trust Bank.<sup>541</sup> The police forced the journalist to take down the reports from their various platforms.<sup>542</sup> In March 2025, police arrested and detained for three

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<sup>531</sup> Punch, #EndBadGovernanceIn Nigeria Protest: Hoodlums attack journalists in Kano, 1 August 2024, [url](#);

Guardian, Hoodlums attack, injure reporters in Kano, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>532</sup> Premium Times, REPORTER’S DIARY : How this police officer’s men attacked me on protest ground, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>533</sup> Radio Ndarason International, Statement to media, 1 August 2024, [url](#); CPJ, In Nigeria, at least 56 journalists attacked and harassed as protests roil region, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>534</sup> David L. Smith, [Twitter], posted on 1 August 2024, [url](#); RSF, Nigeria: RSF sounds the alarm after journalists attacked and arrested while covering protests, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>535</sup> Premium Times, 31 journalists face brutality of police, security forces during #EndBadGovernance protests, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>536</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 – Nigeria, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>537</sup> USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>538</sup> USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 – Nigeria, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>539</sup> CPJ, WikkiTimes publisher reporter face criminal charges over reporting on alleged corruption, 16 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>540</sup> FIJ, Highlighting Monthly Attacks on Nigerian Journalists Since World Press Freedom 2024, 6 May 2025, [url](#); NPR, Nigeria has detained a journalist who reported on corruption in a widening crackdown, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>541</sup> CPJ, 4 Nigerian journalists face fresh charges over report tying bank CEO to fraud claims, 18 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>542</sup> MFWA, Four journalists detained after corruption reporting, denied bail, 6 October 2024, [url](#)



hours two journalists on the order of Kano's State's information commissioner after they published an article accusing him of abusing his power.<sup>543</sup>

Sources reported a lack of mechanisms to protect journalists<sup>544</sup> and a 'culture of impunity',<sup>545</sup> with authorities 'rarely' investigating violations of press freedom.<sup>546</sup>

## 2.7. Protesters

Freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association rights are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and Sections 39 and 40 of the Nigerian Constitution. Although the Public Order Act<sup>547</sup> requires police approval for protests, the Court of Appeal of Nigeria ruled this unconstitutional in 2007, yet authorities continued to enforce the requirement.<sup>548</sup>

Federal and state governments frequently ban public events perceived as security threats, particularly those tied to political, ethnic, or religious tensions, such as protests linked to groups like the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).<sup>549</sup>

Between August 2024 and April 2025, Nigerian security forces reportedly used excessive force to disperse protests across Nigeria.<sup>550</sup> Between 1 and 10 August 2024, protests organised by a coalition of various activist groups and known by the hashtag #EndBadGovernance took place across Nigeria, driven by public outrage over soaring inflation, corruption, and the removal of fuel subsidies.<sup>551</sup> According to Amnesty International, at least 24 protesters were killed during the protests, many of them shot with live ammunition at close range by security forces. The organisation also documented the detention of over 1 200 individuals, including minors,<sup>552</sup> activists and journalists.<sup>553</sup> In the aftermath, authorities charged 146 protesters.<sup>554</sup> Dozens of protesters, including minors, were charged with treason,

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<sup>543</sup> Kano Times, ASKOJ Condemns Persecution of Journalists, Seeks End to Press Suppression, 25 March 2025, [url](#); Premium Times, Kano State Commissioner Orders Police Arrest of Journalist over 'Critical' Article, 25 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>544</sup> Reporters without Borders, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>545</sup> Premium Times, Security operatives behind attacks against journalists in 2024 – Report, 18 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>546</sup> International Press Institute (IPI), 2024 IPI Africa monitoring annual round-up, 12 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>547</sup> Nigeria, Public Order Act, Chapter 382 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1979, [url](#)

<sup>548</sup> AI, Bloody August: Nigerian government's violent crackdown on #EndBadGovernance protests [AFR 44/8780/2024], November 2024, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>549</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>550</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); AI, Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protesters, 28 November 2024, [url](#); Civicus, 2025 State of Civil Society Report, March 2025, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>551</sup> AI, Bloody August: Nigerian Government's Violent Crackdown on #EndBadGovernance Protests, November 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>552</sup> AI, Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protesters, 28 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>553</sup> AI, Bloody August: Nigerian Government's Violent Crackdown on #EndBadGovernance Protests, November 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>554</sup> AI, Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protesters, 28 November 2024, [url](#)



facing a possible death sentence.<sup>555</sup> In November 2024, the high court in Abuja arraigned 114 #EndBadGovernance protesters, most of them minors, who spent over two months in detention under ‘appalling conditions’.<sup>556</sup> Outrage over court images of the children showing their poor conditions, including signs of malnutrition,<sup>557</sup> led Nigeria’s president to order the release of more than 29 children facing the death penalty and launch an investigation into the officials responsible.<sup>558</sup> In Katsina State, 12 children under 16 also faced unfair trials, many ‘arrested simply for being on the streets during the protests’, according to Amnesty International.<sup>559</sup>

Labour unions were also involved in the #EndBadGovernance protests.<sup>560</sup> In August 2024, security forces raided the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) headquarters in Abuja, allegedly searching for protest-related materials.<sup>561</sup> The following month, the NLC’s President was arrested after criticising fuel price hikes and threatening a national strike,<sup>562</sup> then was later released.<sup>563</sup>

On 29 March 2025, Nigerian security forces used live ammunition against a peaceful pro-Palestinian procession by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in Abuja, killing and arresting protesters.<sup>564</sup> On 7 April 2025, Nigerians in different states participated in protests organised by the Take It Back Movement, opposing the misuse of the Cybercrime Act and worsening economic conditions. Police used tear gas in Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt to disperse demonstrators and restricted access to public spaces.<sup>565</sup> Authorities claimed the organisers attempted to discredit the Nigeria Police Force by holding the protest on the same day designated to celebrate its contributions to national security.<sup>566</sup>

## 2.8. Human rights defenders and activists

Nigeria’s civil society is active and diverse, with NGOs generally free to form and operate.<sup>567</sup> Civil society organisations have played important roles during elections and public protests, including the August-September 2024 protests. However, civic space in Nigeria has continued to decline throughout 2024, with increasing restrictions on public dissent, freedom of

<sup>555</sup> HRW, Nigeria: Protesters Charged with Treason, 6 September 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Nigeria charges 76, including minors, with treason after August protests, 1 November 2024, [url](#); CNN, 29 children may be sentenced to death for protesting against cost-of-living crisis in Nigeria, 3 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>556</sup> AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>557</sup> BBC News, Nigeria drops treason charges against children after outcry, 5 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>558</sup> AP News, Nigeria’s president orders the release of 29 children facing death penalty over protests, 4 November 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Nigeria drops treason charges against children after outcry, 5 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>559</sup> AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights; Nigeria, 29 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>560</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>561</sup> Channels TV, Security Operatives Raid NLC Headquarters, Cart Away Documents, 8 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>562</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>563</sup> Vanguard, Ajaero released as outrage trails arrest, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>564</sup> AP News, Clash between Nigerian security forces and members of pro-Palestinians group kill 6, 29 March 2025, [url](#); AI, Nigeria: Violent crackdown on IMN Protests Must End, 30 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>565</sup> AA, Nigerians protest over cybercrime act, economic conditions, 7 April 2025, [url](#); BBC News, ‘Take it Back’ protest across Nigeria – wetin e dey about?, 7 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>566</sup> Nigeria, NPF, Nationwide protest: NPF Cautions Against Ill-Timed Protest across the Country, 7 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>567</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025– Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); ICNL, Nigeria, 4 June 2025, [url](#)



expression, and civil society activities,<sup>568</sup> particularly through state surveillance and protest suppression.<sup>569</sup> Statistics from a DataPhyte report show that between 2016 and 2024,<sup>570</sup> civic space actors and institutions faced major crises, including physical violence as well as restrictive legislation and policies.<sup>571</sup> National security is cited as a key factor driving restrictions on civic rights in Nigeria, based on 14 years of civic space data from a Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) report.<sup>572</sup>

The North-Central region recorded the highest levels of civic space restrictions, driven by communal clashes, heavy military presence, and suppression of dissent, followed by the North-West, where insecurity and state-imposed measures have led to widespread arrests and shutdowns of communication services. The North-East faced ongoing restrictions due to insurgency, though civil society remains somewhat resilient. The southern regions reported relatively lower restrictions due to stronger civic institutions and greater media freedom.<sup>573</sup> However, a Nigerian senior security advisor<sup>574</sup> told the EUAA that, in the South-East region, the right to free speech by citizens, including traditional and religious leaders, has been severely curtailed by fears of arrests, abductions and killings by both government security forces and by pro-Biafra armed groups.<sup>575</sup> For more information see [2.9. Members and perceived supporters of political parties and separatist movements](#).

Civil groups' members 'face intimidation and physical harm', especially when speaking out against Boko Haram or probing military abuses.<sup>576</sup> In January 2025, 67 Nigerian civil society organisations publicly denounced an escalation of crackdown on civic space, citing threats and harassment by security forces against activists, journalists, and NGOs.<sup>577</sup> The government reportedly used the 2015 Cybercrimes Act to curb online publications and to arrest and detain activists and journalists for their online activity.<sup>578</sup> For more information see [2.6 Journalists and media workers](#).

Illustrative examples of incidents of harassment, detention, and criminalisation of activists include:

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<sup>568</sup> Primorg News, Nigerians To Tinubu: Shrinking Civic Space Threatening Democracy, 29 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>569</sup> Kimpact Development Initiative, Protecting the Civil Space, Trends, Challenges, and Future Outlook in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>570</sup> Dataphyte, Media Reports of Threats to Civic Space Actors and Institutions in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), pp. 46, 70, 75, 76, 87.

<sup>571</sup> Dubawa, Civic space actors, institutions under severe threat in Nigeria – Report, 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>572</sup> Kimpact Development Initiative, Protecting the Civil Space, Trends, Challenges, and Future Outlook in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 8, 15

<sup>573</sup> Kimpact Development Initiative, Protecting the Civil Space, Trends, Challenges, and Future Outlook in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), pp. 79, 80

<sup>574</sup> The source is a Nigerian senior security advisor, working for an international research organisation that monitors conflict dynamics across the world. The source wished to remain anonymous for security and operational reasons.

<sup>575</sup> Nigerian Senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>576</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025– Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>577</sup> Daily Trust, 67 CSOs to Tinubu: End Crackdown on Activists, Journalists, Others, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Business Day, #EndBadGovernance Protest Report: CSOs urge Tinubu to halt police harassment of Amnesty International, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Vanguard, 67 CSOs to Tinubu: End crackdown on activists, journalists, others, 15 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>578</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)



- In May 2024, a 33-year-old man in Adamawa State was arrested for allegedly misusing social media by posting an unsubstantiated TikTok video criticising public officials, which police said could incite unrest and damage reputations.<sup>579</sup>
- On 20 October 2024, during the #EndSARS<sup>580</sup> memorial protest in Lagos, a nurse and activist was allegedly assaulted by police dispersing demonstrators with tear gas and force. She later posted a video online criticising top government figures, which led to her arrest on 13 December 2024. Authorities charged her under the Cybercrime Act for allegedly using the post ‘to bully, threaten, and harass the person of Seyi Tinubu.’<sup>581</sup>
- In December 2024, a Nigerian lawyer and activist was released on bail after spending 20 days in detention over criminal defamation and cybercrime charges related to a book that alleged judicial corruption. The arrest followed a petition citing 31 allegedly defamatory excerpts from the publication.<sup>582</sup>
- On 23 May 2025, a coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs) demanded the immediate release and protection of an 18-year-old activist detained after criticising Sokoto Governor Ahmed Aliyu. She had faced repeated harassment, abduction, and detention, allegedly including physical abuse and being forcibly injected with unknown substances. She was initially abducted in November 2024, allegedly beaten and left injured, then rearrested and charged in a sharia court.<sup>583</sup>

## 2.9. Members and perceived supporters of political parties and separatist movements

The legal framework guarantees the right for Nigerians to organise in different political parties as well as the equal participation in political life for all cultural, religious, and ethnic groups.<sup>584</sup> The 1999 Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and of the press.<sup>585</sup> In practice, legislation relating to sedition, criminal defamation, and the dissemination of false information have constrained these rights (see also [2.6 Journalists and media workers](#)). In some cases, authorities have banned online content; and occasionally, internet service providers have blocked access to websites, particularly those promoting separatist agendas, such as pro-Biafra platforms, following directives from the Nigerian Communications Commission.<sup>586</sup> In April 2025, for instance, authorities prohibited radio stations from airing a song that criticises President Bola Tinubu and his administration's policies.<sup>587</sup> While the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, federal and state authorities routinely prohibit or disperse

<sup>579</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 – Nigeria, 16 October 2024, [url](#); Leadership, Police Arrest ‘TikToker’ for Alleged Abuse of Social Media in Adamawa, May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>580</sup> On 4 October 2020, a viral video showing Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) officers allegedly shooting two men sparked the #EndSARS protests on 8 October; the nationwide demonstrations lasted several days, left at least 56 people dead, and led to the disbandment of the unit by Nigerian authorities. See: AI, #EndSARS movement: from Twitter to Nigerian streets, 8 February 2021, [url](#)

<sup>581</sup> Punch, How Nigerian authorities use Cybercrime Act to harass, detain journalists, activists, 9 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>582</sup> Premium Times, Dele Farotimi leaves prison after 20 days of detention, 24 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>583</sup> Cable (The), CSOs demand release, protection of woman arrested for ‘criticising’ Sokoto governor, 23 May 2025, [url](#); Premium Times, Coalition demands release, protection of woman detained after criticising Sokoto Governor, 24 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>584</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>585</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>586</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>587</sup> AP, A song critical of Nigeria’s president is barred from airwaves, 11 April 2025, [url](#)



public gatherings deemed to pose a threat to national security or likely to provoke political, ethnic, or religious unrest.<sup>588</sup> See also [2.7 Protesters](#).

In Nigeria, political actors, parties (and separatist movements<sup>589</sup>) frequently mobilise support along ethnic and religious lines. According to Freedom House, some communities may experience underrepresentation or neglect, particularly in regions where they constitute a minority or where their affiliated political parties do not hold power.<sup>590</sup> Separatist groups in the South-East as well as militant factions in the Niger Delta advocating for regional autonomy have continued to enjoy varying levels of local support.<sup>591</sup> These movements are particularly active in areas where communities perceive themselves as politically, economically, and culturally marginalised.<sup>592</sup>

In an interview with the EUAA, a senior security advisor<sup>593</sup> described the attitude by the Nigerian government and its agents towards separatist agitation as ‘very negative, combative and repressive’. The same source noted that authorities are especially sensitive towards the Biafran agitation given its longer history and the consequences that led to the war between 1967 and 1970.<sup>594</sup>

Local and international organisations reported that the Nigerian army has perpetrated various abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture, particularly during operations against insurgent groups in the North and separatist movements in the South-East.<sup>595</sup> (See also [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#)).

### **2.9.1. Treatment by authorities of pro-Biafran separatists and perceived pro-Biafran supporters**

For background information on pro-Biafran separatist groups, including their goals, capacity, *modus operandi*, areas of operation and violations perpetrated by them see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

While pro-Biafra groups, inspired by the 1967–1970 secessionist movement, share the goal of secession, they differ in approach.<sup>596</sup> IPOB,<sup>597</sup> a splinter faction from the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), has been the most active group in the agitation for restoration of an independent Republic of Biafra for the past decade.<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>589</sup> Demarest, L. and Langer, A., Managing Diversity in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic National Assembly: Integrated Parties versus Ethno-Regional Balancing, 7 April 2023, [url](#); Eze, O. J. et al., Ethnic-Based Violence: Nigeria Perspectives, 25 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>590</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>591</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>592</sup> Mezie-Okoye, C. C., The Marginalization of Igbo and The Emergence of IPOB in Nigeria, 20 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>593</sup> The source is a Nigerian senior security advisor, working for an international research organisation that monitors conflict dynamics across the world. The source wished to remain anonymous for security and operational reasons.

<sup>594</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>595</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>596</sup> Conversation (The), A breakdown of Biafra separatist and where Kanu fits into the picture, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>597</sup> IPOB, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>598</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025



Founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu,<sup>599</sup> IPOB has been the most militant expression of post-war Igbo nationalism.<sup>600</sup> Citing long-standing grievances of marginalisation,<sup>601</sup> the group has gained significant support both domestically and in the diaspora.<sup>602</sup> While conservative Igbo nationalists have advocated for gradual, diplomatic efforts towards fair political and economic inclusion within Nigeria, Kanu's interpretation of Igbo nationalism has been grounded in radical separatism, aligning with the confrontational faction of the movement. In 2014, Kanu first introduced the idea of armed struggle, followed by an open call for weapons in 2015.<sup>603</sup> In 2020, he founded the Eastern Security Network (ESN),<sup>604</sup> allegedly in response to rising security threats, particularly those posed by Fulani herdsmen. IPOB claims the ESN has played a key role in reducing attacks, killings, and farm invasions across the region.<sup>605</sup> As the armed paramilitary wing of IPOB, some ESN members include former soldiers who served in the Nigerian army, while others are civilians trained in basic combat skills. Many are armed with military-grade rifles.<sup>606</sup>

In 2017, the Nigerian Federal Government and South-East Governors proscribed IPOB as a terrorist organisation.<sup>607</sup> His leader, Nnamdi Kanu, who has also British nationality, was arrested in Nigeria in 2015 but disappeared while on bail in 2017.<sup>608</sup> In 2021, he was detained in Kenya and later reappeared in a Nigerian court that same year, facing seven charges of terrorism, which he denies in his ongoing trial.<sup>609</sup> Kanu's trial has faced repeated delays, judicial recusals, and two rejected bail applications.<sup>610</sup> In October 2023, the Enugu High Court ruled the designation of IPOB as terrorist group unconstitutional;<sup>611</sup> a ruling which was however overturned by Nigeria's Supreme Court the same year.<sup>612</sup> In January 2025, a unanimous three-member panel of the Court of Appeal upheld the proscription, ruling that the government acted lawfully.<sup>613</sup> In response, IPOB filed a notice of appeal at the Supreme Court on 7 February 2025, challenging the decision.<sup>614</sup>

The Nigerian senior security advisor stated that, while initially IPOB backed armed struggle - with its leader urging loyalists to take up arms against the Nigerian state and 'take down'

<sup>599</sup> Mezie-Okoye, C. C., The Marginalization of Igbo and The Emergence of IPOB in Nigeria, 20 March 2025, [url](#); Ibukuntomiwa, F. G. et al., Federalism and Agitation of Self-Determination in Nigeria: A Study of the Indigenous People of Biafra, March 2025, [url](#), pp. 37-38

<sup>600</sup> Conversation (The), A breakdown of Biafra separatist and where Kanu fits into the picture, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>601</sup> Sun (The), Igbo marginalisation in Nigeria: A deepening divide, 24 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>602</sup> Ibukuntomiwa, F. G. et al., Federalism and Agitation of Self-Determination in Nigeria: A Study of the Indigenous People of Biafra, March 2025, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>603</sup> Conversation (The), A breakdown of Biafra separatist and where Kanu fits into the picture, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>604</sup> Guardian (The), Why IPOB formed Eastern Security Network, by Kanu, 16 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>605</sup> EONS Intelligence, IPOB Celebrates 4th Anniversary of Eastern Security Network, Commends Operatives for Bravery and Sacrifices, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>606</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>607</sup> Premium Times, Appeal Court affirms IPOB's proscription as terrorist group, 30 January 2025, [url](#); Round Check, Uncovering Pro-IPOB Accounts Using Foreign Faces to Promote Secession With Propaganda On Elon Musk's X, 14 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>608</sup> Reuters, Separatist Kanu faces new trial in Nigeria under fourth judge, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>609</sup> Reuters, Fact Check: Kenya has not demanded Nigeria return separatist leader, 19 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>610</sup> Reuters, Separatist Kanu faces new trial in Nigeria under fourth judge, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>611</sup> Premium Times, Appeal Court affirms IPOB's proscription as terrorist group, 30 January 2025, [url](#); Round Check, Uncovering Pro-IPOB Accounts Using Foreign Faces to Promote Secession With Propaganda On Elon Musk's X, 14 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>612</sup> AP, Nigeria's Supreme Court reinstates terrorism charges against separatist leader, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>613</sup> Punch, Appeal court upholds IPOB's proscription, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>614</sup> Business Day, IPOB challenges proscription ruling at Supreme Court, 8 February 2025, [url](#)





security personnel - in recent years, the group has shifted to a non-violent approach, calling for the realisation of Biafra through peaceful means, particularly through a *referendum*. The source added that such a change in messaging must be seen more as a tactical rather than an ideological shift, namely as a legal strategy tied to Kanu's trial, aimed at softening his image and gaining international support.<sup>615</sup>

Following the re-arrest of Kanu in 2021, Finland-based Simon Ekpa, a self-proclaimed disciple of Kanu, gained prominence as the new lead broadcaster for Radio Biafra.<sup>616</sup> Ekpa was however removed within a few months after refusing to sign the Radio's rules of engagement.<sup>617</sup> In July 2021, Simon Ekpa declared that the Biafra movement had entered an 'autopilot phase'<sup>618</sup> and in 2022 he announced the establishment of the Biafra Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE).<sup>619</sup> His faction began recruiting fighters, including from the ESN, who became known as 'Autopilot'. BRGIE, a diaspora-led separatist group, is now considered as a more violent group than IPOB, which has distanced itself from it. Since 2023, fighters under Ekpa's rebranded BRGIE group have been linked to rising violence in the region.<sup>620</sup>

In November 2024, Ekpa was arrested in Finland by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on suspicion of inciting terrorism and spreading violent separatist propaganda online.<sup>621</sup> In March 2025, Nigeria's Sanctions Committee designated Simon Ekpa, several IPOB members, and affiliated businesses as terrorism financiers, citing their role in funding and inciting attacks linked to IPOB's armed wing, the ESN. Ekpa was accused of organising 49 international fundraising campaigns between October 2023 and September 2024, allegedly used to support violence in southeastern Nigeria.<sup>622</sup> These actions were reportedly coordinated through social media, particularly X, and linked to a broader digital propaganda strategy,<sup>623</sup> also aimed at spreading disinformation and amplifying calls for civil disobedience.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>616</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025. A central instrument in Biafra's propaganda strategy during the civil war, Radio Biafra has remained an important communication channel to disseminate official narratives, often biased and falsified. See Wolff, R., *Visual Propaganda and Biafran National Identity: Artists Constructing a Nation During Wartime*, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>617</sup> Sun (The), IPOB sacks Kanu's successor in Radio Biafra, 22 July 2021, [url](#)

<sup>618</sup> Sahara Reporters, IPOB Counters Nnamdi Kanu's Disciple, Simon Ekpa, Says Group Not On Autopilot, 18 August 2021, [url](#); Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>619</sup> Sahara Reporters, Nnamdi Kanu's Self-professed Disciple, Simon Ekpa Declares Full Biafran Government In Exile, Says No Going Back On Separation From Nigeria, 2 August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>620</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>621</sup> VOA, Nigeria hopes for extradition of separatist leader, but analysts are skeptical, 22 November 2024, [url](#);

HumAngle, Simon Ekpa Has Benn Imprisoned. What Does it Mean for IPOB Agitation?, 21 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>622</sup> Premium Times, Nigerian govt designates Simon Ekpa, IPOB members, Lakurawa, firms as terrorist financiers, 7 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>623</sup> Dubawa, How disinformation fuels pro-Biafran agenda on social media while undermining democracy, 18 March 2025, [url](#); FIJ, Simon Ekpa's BRGIE Enjoys Uninterrupted Broadcast on X Despite Terrorism Financing Case, 27 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>624</sup> Round Check, Uncovering Pro-IPOB Accounts Using Foreign Faces to Promote Secession With Propaganda On Elon Musk's X, 14 December 2024, [url](#); AFP Fact Check, Video of Musk saying Trump will secure Nigerian separatist's freedom is deepfake, 20 March 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Fact Check: No evidence Trump called for Nigerian separatist's release; audio synthetic, experts say, 6 December 2024, [url](#)





IPOB and ESN members were killed by Nigerian security forces during special operations<sup>625</sup> (see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#)). State repression against separatist movements and their perceived sympathisers is described as ‘frequent’ and ‘excessive’.<sup>626</sup> Nigerians living in the South-East have been at risk of arbitrary arrests amid the government’s campaign against IPOB’s armed wing.<sup>627</sup> National media reported cases where government security raided communities in the South-East states, harassing and arresting individuals, who were later released,<sup>628</sup> as well as cases of harassment and extortion of Igbos at checkpoints in the South-East.<sup>629</sup> A 2024 report by local NGO International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law (Intersociety)<sup>630</sup> indicated that Nigerian security forces were accused of committing extensive human rights violations in Eastern Nigeria under the pretext of combating ‘IPOB/ESN/Biafra terrorism’. These included arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions without trial, secret abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and destruction of civilian property. Intersociety further alleged that the security operations affected unarmed Igbo civilians and reported that state forces were responsible for over twice as many civilian deaths (32 300) compared to those attributed to armed non-state actors (14 500) in the region.<sup>631</sup> Similarly, a Nigerian senior security advisor told the EUAA that real or suspected supporters of pro-Biafran agitation are often arrested and detained, sometimes for years and without formal charges or trial. Many are held in military facilities under harsh, inhumane conditions. Often, security forces carry out mass, indiscriminate arrests. According to the same source, Nigerian security forces are ‘negatively disposed’ to any expression of support, endorsement, or sympathy with the Biafran cause – and not just against the armed groups. ‘Hundreds - if not thousands - of young people are frequently stopped at the numerous checkpoints across the South-East, and if anything linked to Biafra is found, such as content on their phones, it is treated as an offense, and they are arrested, detained or otherwise asked to bail themselves – another word for extortion.’<sup>632</sup>

The Nigerian senior security advisor added that most prominent individuals who are strongly supportive of the Biafran cause - considered ‘individuals of concern’ by the security system - are being monitored very closely online and offline. However, the state does not have the capacity to track the large number of people who support the cause. ‘Therefore, it is unlikely that all supporters are being monitored.’<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Nigeria Watch, Fourteenth Report on Violence 2024, [url](#), p. 14; Premium Times, Soldiers’ Killing: Nigerian troops kill six suspected IPOB members in Abia forest, 9 June 2024, [url](#); Premium Times, IPOB: About 200 security agents killed in South East – SSS Witness, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>626</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>627</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>628</sup> Premium Times, Abia killing: Tension as soldiers arrest several people, harass residents, 1 June 2025, [url](#); The Cable, Troops ‘raid Abia communities, arrest residents’, over killing of soldiers, 2 June 2024, [url](#) ;

<sup>629</sup> Vanguard, We’re being treated like evil, slaves at road checkpoints – South East road users, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>630</sup> Intersociety is a local NGO whose declared aim is to promote and protect democracy, rule of law, and human rights through research, documentation, advocacy, and public engagement. See Intersociety, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>631</sup> Intersociety, Nigeria’s leading human rights group releases two special international reports on rights abuses and violations in the East, 22 December 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>632</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>633</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025



During election periods, there have been reports of instances of voter suppression and intimidation targeting Igbo communities,<sup>634</sup> including violence against Igbo voters, online and public hate speech, destruction of Igbo-owned businesses and physical attacks.<sup>635</sup> At times, the media has portrayed Igbo individuals in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes, associating them with criminality or economic greed. Some Nigerian politicians and social media influencers have reportedly used inflammatory language to incite hostility and violence against the Igbo population.<sup>636</sup>

### **2.9.2. Treatment by pro-Biafran armed groups of Igbos in the South-East perceived as non-supporting the cause**

Civic space in the South-East is reported as increasingly shrinking, also due to actions linked to separatist groups, such as use of propaganda, labelling, cyberbullying, forced restrictions (such as sit-at-home orders), various forms of intimidation, violence and the suppression of basic civil rights.<sup>637</sup> Open criticism of the separatist movement within the South-East has become rare, and the general climate is one of intimidation and silence. According to the Nigerian senior security advisor, 'self-censorship is pervasive, with many Igbos feeling held hostage by separatist narratives and by actors operating in the region.' Igbo individuals who are critical to separatist groups are often accused of being collaborators with the Nigerian state, planted to infiltrate and undermine the movement from within. Many, particularly public figures, such as traditional leaders, clerics, journalists, and civil society representatives, feel they are under constant surveillance, face potential repercussions for expressing dissenting views, and fear being targeted or labelled as enemies of the cause. There have been documented instances in which traditional rulers and religious leaders who publicly advocated for moderation and non-violence received threatening messages; but also, some cases of violence, including the killing of traditional rulers and others perceived as unsupportive of the agitation.<sup>638</sup> In October 2024, when Bianca Ojukwu, widow of the late Biafran leader Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, accepted President Tinubu's appointment as junior minister for foreign affairs,<sup>639</sup> a US-based Biafra supporter accused her of betraying the Igbos by 'joining the enemy'; another 'independent Biafra media activist', warned Ojukwu that 'no one has ever served Nigeria and retired without shame and disgrace.'<sup>640</sup>

The same source informed that Simon Ekpa is reported to have issued a public warning in August 2024 indicating that the struggle had entered a new phase, whereby the movement was no longer focused solely on resisting the Nigerian state but was now also targeting internal collaborators. These included politicians, religious figures, and traditional authorities who were perceived to be obstructing or weakening the separatist effort.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> Sun (The), Igbo marginalisation in Nigeria: A deepening divide, 24 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>635</sup> Mezie-Okoye, C. C., The Marginalization of Igbo and The Emergence of IPOB in Nigeria, 20 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>636</sup> Ivorgba, E. A., Historical analysis of Igbo-phobia and its impact on national integration in Nigeria, April 2025, [url](#), pp. 1109-1110

<sup>637</sup> Amaechi K. J. and Jackson T. J., From Civil to 'Uncivil' Society? Separatist Social Movements and the Shrinking Civil Space in South-East, Nigeria, May 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 8-12

<sup>638</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>639</sup> Vanguard, Why Bianca Ojukwu's appointment is beyond politics, 31 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>640</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>641</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025



A report by intelligence consultancy SBM Intel revealed that a sit-at-home order enforced by IPOB in the South-East has resulted in the deaths of over 700 people in Nigeria's South-East over the past four years. Such a sit-at-home order - consisting in imposing a shutdown of business and services every Monday - was originally intended as a symbolic act of solidarity to demand the release of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu. The weekly Monday shutdowns have since transformed into a prolonged crisis, characterised by widespread fear, violence against those who disregard the order, and severe economic disruption. Between 2021 and the beginning of May 2025, over 700 people were killed in 'IPOB-related violence', including in retaliatory attacks by IPOB on civilians who defied sit-at-home orders. The group's enforcement methods include setting fire to vehicles, looting, and targeted killings of individuals who defy the order.<sup>642</sup> As noted by the senior security advisor, the sit-at-home lockdowns have had a significant economic impact, further deepening regional disparities. As a result, there has been a clear shift in public sentiment. While many Igbos remain frustrated with their political marginalisation, there is growing disillusionment with the tactics of IPOB, ESN, and other separatist groups, seen by many as harming the region, without achieving any political objective. Despite this, public criticism is rare due to threats, intimidation and the fear of being misunderstood as siding with the Nigerian state. Igbos who question the legitimacy, methods, or direction of the agitation are frequently labelled as traitors or betrayers of the cause.<sup>643</sup>

IPOB actively discourages Igbo youth from joining Nigerian security forces,<sup>644</sup> issuing statements that imply harsh consequences for those who do. According to the Nigerian senior security advisor, the group spread narratives claiming Igbo youths are used as sacrificial lambs in a fight that doesn't concern them, fighting against religious extremists that they don't understand (i.e. Boko Haram), defending a country that often discriminates against them, while 'they should save their energy for the Biafran army that will come.'<sup>645</sup> Beyond the psychological pressure, Igbo individuals serving in the Nigerian military have been specifically targeted and killed by armed groups in the South-East.<sup>646</sup> The same source mentioned the example of a retired Major General,<sup>647</sup> an Igbo from the South-East who was abducted in September 2023 and eventually killed, even after his family had paid a 50 000 USD ransom; the three killers, arrested by police in May 2024, reportedly confessed that they were IPOB members. Another incident involved an army couple from Imo State,<sup>648</sup> who was stopped at an illegal checkpoint, murdered and dismembered; then a video of the killing was circulated online with a warning: 'this is what happens to those associated with the Nigerian army.' There have been other killings of Igbos serving in the Nigerian army, police and other security agencies. Although it is often difficult to establish precisely who is behind the killings - whether IPOB, the pro-Biafra government-in-exile, or criminal groups exploiting the name of

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<sup>642</sup> SBM Intel, Four Years of Disruption: Unmasking the Impact of IPOB's Sit-at-Home Order in Southeast Nigeria, 26 May 2025, [url](#), pp. 3-8, 23

<sup>643</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>644</sup> Punch, Army warns IPOB to stop discouraging Igbo youths from its recruitment exercise, 8 October 2024, [url](#); Public Watch, IPOB Warns Igbo Youths: Do Not Join Nigerian Army Or Be Killed Cheaply By Northern Terrorists, 8 April 2025, [url](#); Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>645</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>646</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>647</sup> Punch, Criminal gang which killed abducted Imo retired general arrested, 17 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>648</sup> Premium Times, IPOB denies responsibility for the murder of army couple in Imo, 4 May 2022, [url](#)





IPOB - the impact is the same: it discourages young Igbo people from joining the Nigerian military or police, knowing they or their families in the South-East could be targeted.<sup>649</sup>

## 2.10. Individuals targeted by Boko Haram

For background information on Boko Haram and its splinter groups, including their capacity, *modus operandi*, areas of operation and violations perpetrated by them see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

Boko Haram mainly operates in North-East Nigeria.<sup>650</sup> The major point of contention between the two main Boko Haram factions - Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) - is rooted in a fundamental disagreement over how civilians should be treated. JAS views civilians as legitimate targets, operating through extreme violence and sectarianism, including suicide attacks, massacres, and the enslavement of those it labels 'infidels' or 'apostates'. ISWAP, on the other hand, distinguishes between Muslims and non-Muslims, seeking to build support among Muslim communities by imposing taxes and enforcing its own governance system, rather than relying on indiscriminate plunder. While ISWAP limits violence against Muslim civilians, non-Muslims remain unprotected under its rule.<sup>651</sup>

JAS considers unaffiliated Muslim civilians to be apostates and targets them accordingly. Lower-level fighters frequently conduct raids independently, risking punishment if apprehended. JAS raids go beyond merely looting goods or money; they also involve the abduction of girls and women. JAS commanders have reportedly rewarded loyal fighters by permitting forced marriages with these captives, a practice prohibited by ISWAP.<sup>652</sup>

ISWAP has carried out massacres of civilians accused of breaching its rules. Justifications include refusal to pay taxes, suspected cooperation with government forces, or defiance of its authority. In accordance with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)<sup>653</sup> ideology, ISWAP considers the killing and enslavement of non-Muslims to be permissible.<sup>654</sup> Media sources noted that ISWAP have increasingly targeted farmers, fishermen, loggers, herders, and metal scrap collectors, accusing them of spying and relaying information to the military and local militias opposing them.<sup>655</sup> In September 2024, ISWAP militants attacked Mafa town in Yobe State,

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<sup>649</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>650</sup> Reuters, ISWAP claims responsibility for deadly attacks in Nigeria, 21 April 2025, [url](#); AP, At least 7 members of Nigerian security force missing after insurgents ambush convoy, 20 November 2024, [url](#); UNIDIR, Boko Haram - Mapping an evolving armed constellation, September 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-19

<sup>651</sup> International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#); Foucher, V., Boko Haram: Mapping an Evolving Armed Constellation, UNIDIR, 16 September 2024, [url](#), pp. 16-19

<sup>652</sup> International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>653</sup> In 2015, Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the ISIS, leading the movement to adopt the name Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). However, internal divisions soon emerged, and in 2016, dissenting members broke away. This splinter group retained the ISWAP name and gained formal recognition from ISIS. Meanwhile, Shekau and his loyalists formed a separate faction, returning to the original designation of Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS). See Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>654</sup> International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>655</sup> Defense Post, Jihadists Kill at Least 40 Farmers in Northeast Nigeria, 14 January 2025, [url](#); Vanguard, Boko Haram massacre farmers, fishermen in Borno for supporting ISWAP, 17 May 2025 [url](#)





killing dozens and destroying the town. While authorities confirmed 34 deaths, locals report over 100 burials across multiple sites. The attack was reportedly carried out as retaliation for the community's refusal to pay extortion levies.<sup>656</sup> In a similar attack in January 2025, ISWAP militants killed some 40 farmers in Borno state, allegedly for trespassing on its territory without permission and failing to pay required levies.<sup>657</sup>

Schoolchildren have been significantly impacted by Boko Haram's campaign against secular education. Attacks on schools and widespread abductions by Boko Haram and other armed groups have led to the closure or destruction of thousands of educational institutions at all levels. Student kidnappings for ransom remain a major threat, particularly in northern Nigeria.<sup>658</sup> In February 2024, suspected Boko Haram fighters abducted over 200 IDPs, mostly children, in Ngala Local Government Area of Borno State.<sup>659</sup>

Boko Haram's attacks on women have been especially severe, with kidnapped victims frequently subjected to forced marriage, sexual violence, and other abuses.<sup>660</sup> (for more information see [Conflict-related violence](#) under [2.3.3. Violence against women and girls](#)). Members of civil society organisations have faced threats and physical violence for speaking out against Boko Haram.<sup>661</sup> Armed groups such as JAS, ISWAP and Bakura have continued to carry out attacks against civilians, including humanitarian workers.<sup>662</sup>

## 2.11. Christians in areas where they are a minority

43.4 % of Nigeria's population identifies as Christian (while 56.1 % as Muslim). In general, Christians are primarily concentrated in the southern regions of the country, whereas Muslims predominantly reside in the northern regions<sup>663</sup> (for more information see [2.12 Muslims in areas where they are a minority](#)). The USDOS International Religious Freedom (IRF) report covering 2023 indicated that Christianity is dominant in the South-South, South-West, (including Lagos), and the South-East region, with Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists, constituting the majority.<sup>664</sup> The same source indicated that Evangelical Christians are growing rapidly in the North-Central, South-East, South-South, and South-West.<sup>665</sup> Christians are a minority in northern Nigeria where Islam is predominant and sharia law is applied.<sup>666</sup> The states where

<sup>656</sup> HumAngle, ISWAP Attack Devastates Mafa in Northeast Nigeria, Leaving A Grim Toll of Death, 4 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>657</sup> Defense Post, Jihadists Kill at Least 40 Farmers in Northeast Nigeria,

<sup>658</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); UN, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 17 July 2024, [url](#), paras. 3, 5

<sup>659</sup> HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>660</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>661</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>662</sup> UN, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 17 July 2024, [url](#), para. 3

<sup>663</sup> Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020, 9 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 49, 56, 113, 193

<sup>664</sup> USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Nigeria, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>665</sup> USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Nigeria, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>666</sup> ICC, Christians in Northern Nigeria Prepare for Christmas Violence, 11 December 2024, [url](#); Daily Trust, Muslim North, Christian North, 14 April 2025, [url](#)



sharia law has been adopted as both civil and criminal law<sup>667</sup> are Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.<sup>668</sup> The USDOS IRF report indicated that even though Islam is the dominant religion in the North-West and North-East regions, ‘significant Christian populations reside there as well’, and that Christians and Muslims ‘reside in approximately equal numbers in the North Central Region’.<sup>669</sup>

Without providing further details, some sources indicated that, in northern states under sharia law, Christians are discriminated against<sup>670</sup> and reportedly treated as ‘second-class citizens’.<sup>671</sup> In the North-East of the country, where Boko Haram predominantly operates, non-Muslims, including Christians, have been subjected to extreme violence by the group. See for more detailed information [2.14 Individuals targeted by Boko Haram](#).

Violent attacks against Christians as well as nonreligious individuals have been reported in recent years.<sup>672</sup> Violence against Christians included forced displacement, indiscriminate killings, and the destruction of homes, churches and livelihoods.<sup>673</sup> Christians, particularly men, are killed in attacks, and women often kidnapped and targeted for sexual violence.<sup>674</sup> According to a 2024 report by the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) on religious persecution in Nigeria,<sup>675</sup> Christian captives are more likely to be executed by their captors than Muslim ones; while the later are released if they cannot afford a ransom, Christian captives are murdered even after ransom is paid.<sup>676</sup>

Although Christians have been more vulnerable in northern states,<sup>677</sup> violence against them is spreading into the Middle Belt and further south.<sup>678</sup> Christians have faced attacks within the context of intercommunal violence<sup>679</sup> between the mostly Muslim herders and largely

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<sup>667</sup> West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>668</sup> ILGA World, ILGA Database: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>669</sup> USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Nigeria, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>670</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); ADF International, Challenging Nigeria university bans against Christian fellowship on campus, 18 March 2024, [url](#); Daily Post, Religious persecution threatens national stability – Northern CAN, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>671</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>672</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); ORFA, ORFA data reveals the scale of abductions and the targeting of Christian communities, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>673</sup> NPR, ‘We are being driven from the land.’ Nigerian village buries its dead after a massacre, 26 July 2025, [url](#); Genocide Watch, Fulani Jihadists massacre over 200 Christians in Nigeria, 14 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>674</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); ORFA, Countering the myth of religious indifference in Nigerian terror (10/2019 – 9/2023), 29 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 30-31

<sup>675</sup> The report covers the period from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2023. Information was collected through five types of sources, including a local partner organization, which collected information on the ground via their network on an ongoing basis; other local partners who also monitor violent incidents; two external sources reporting violent incidents to compare their data against ORFA’s database; and Desk Research / Local Media / NGO reports. For more information, see: ORFA, Nigeria violence incidents – methodology, July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>676</sup> ORFA, Countering the myth of religious indifference in Nigerian terror (10/2019 – 9/2023), 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>677</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); ORFA, Countering the myth of religious indifference in Nigerian terror (10/2019 – 9/2023), 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>678</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); BBC, What is behind the wave of killings in central Nigeria?, 19 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>679</sup> Amnesty International, The State of the World’s Human Rights, Nigeria 2024, 29 April 2025, [url](#); FT, Nigeria’s spiralling rural violence heaps pressure on president, 27 April 2025, [url](#)



Christian farming communities.<sup>680</sup> While the conflict between farmers and herders was resurging over the first half of 2025, there was disagreement among sources over the nature and categorisation<sup>681</sup> of this complex and under-researched phenomenon.<sup>682</sup> While some sources attribute the reasons for this conflict to religious differences between the mostly Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities, and to disputes between herders and farmers over land use,<sup>683</sup> others observers linked the clashes to pressures on herders induced by climate change<sup>684</sup> and competition over ever-dwindling resources,<sup>685</sup> while others labelled the violence as manifestations of organised criminality led by armed groups.<sup>686</sup> For more detailed information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#).

The main perpetrators of violence against Christians are jihadist armed groups,<sup>687</sup> including Fulani (jihadist) armed groups,<sup>688</sup> which some sources indicated as the main threat to Christians in Nigeria.<sup>689</sup> Similarly, ORFA indicated that the main actors responsible for the killing of Christians are Armed Fulani Herdsmen, which are part of the Fulani Ethnic Militia (FEM), 'Other Terrorist Groups', an actor the source also refer to 'Fulani bandits' (and allegedly connected to the FEM); as well as Boko Haram,<sup>690</sup> including its splinter faction ISWAP.<sup>691</sup> The Nigerian government has denied allegations that Christians are deliberately targeted in Nigeria and has deemed such claims as 'misleading'.<sup>692</sup> According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Nigeria is battling multiple threats—banditry, terrorism, and organized crime—which

<sup>680</sup> BBC, What is behind the wave of killings in central Nigeria?, 19 June 2025, [url](#); Ojewale, O. and Onuoha, F., Nigeria's North Central violence reveals systemic state failure, ISS, 26 June 2025, [url](#); ICC, 9 Killed in Attacks on Nigeria's Christian Farming Communities, 6 August 2025, [url](#); BISI, The Growth of Farmer-Herder Violence in Nigeria, 26 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>681</sup> DW, Nigeria's farmer-herder conflicts: Where is the end? [Video], 21 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>682</sup> Nana, S.S., How to stop Nigeria's worsening farmer-pastoralist violence, TNH, 5 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>683</sup> Ojewale, O. and Onuoha, F., Nigeria's North Central violence reveals systemic state failure, ISS, 26 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>684</sup> DW, Nigeria's farmer-herder conflicts: Where is the end? [Video], 21 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>685</sup> FT, Nigeria's spiralling rural violence heaps pressure on president, 27 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>686</sup> DW, Nigeria's farmer-herder conflicts: Where is the end? [Video], 21 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>687</sup> Genocide Watch, Fulani Jihadists massacre over 200 Christians in Nigeria, 14 June 2025, [url](#); ORFA, ORFA data reveals the scale of abductions and the targeting of Christian communities, 28 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>688</sup> Intersociety, Nigeria Headquartering 22 Islamic Terror Groups in Africa Seeking to Obliterate Christianity And Indigenous Cultural Heritage, August 2025, [url](#), pp 2, 4; Hudson Institute, Conflict and Persecution in Nigeria: The Case for a CPC Designation, 12 March 2025, [url](#); Catholic Register (The), Nigeria's government complicit in Christian slaughter, priest says, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>689</sup> ORFA, How Fulani Militias Became Nigeria's Deadliest Group While Escaping Global Notice, 14 July 2025, [url](#); Hudson Institute, Conflict and Persecution in Nigeria: The Case for a CPC Designation, 12 March 2025, [url](#); Catholic Register (The), Nigeria's government complicit in Christian slaughter, priest says, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>690</sup> On 11 December 2020, the International Criminal Court had indicated that 'Boko Haram and its splinter groups have committed the following acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes: murder; rape, sexual slavery, including forced pregnancy and forced marriage; enslavement; torture; cruel treatment; outrages upon personal dignity; taking of hostages; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities; intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance; intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education and to places of worship and similar institutions; conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities; persecution on gender and religious grounds; and other inhumane acts'. ICC, Statement of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the situation in Nigeria, 11 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>691</sup> ORFA, Countering the myth of religious indifference in Nigerian terror (10/2019 – 9/2023), 29 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7. See also: ICC, 9 Killed in Attacks on Nigeria's Christian Farming Communities, 6 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>692</sup> Pulse, Christians not targeted for killings in Nigeria - FG replies US, 15 March 2025, [url](#); Leadership, Federal Gov't Dismisses Targeted Persecution Of Nigerian Christians, 12 April 2025, [url](#)



cut across religious and ethnic lines ... [and it] firmly rejects the portrayal of the situation as an Islamist extermination of Christians.”<sup>693</sup>

Based on its monitoring, ORFA indicated that, between October 2019 and September 2024, 2.4 Christians were killed in the country for every Muslim, and that in states where attacks against Christians occurred, the rate increases to 5.2.<sup>694</sup> According to Nigerian human rights NGO Intersociety, at least 7 087 Christians were killed in Nigeria and 7 800 abducted between 1 January and 10 August 2025. The North-Central Benue State was identified as the hardest hit area (with at least 1 100 deaths), followed by North-Central Plateau State (806 deaths), and Kaduna State in North-West region (620 deaths).<sup>695</sup> Such data could not be corroborated by other sources. For more detailed information on security incidents at national and state level (including those affecting Christians within the context of farmers and herders’ conflict and ‘banditry’ related violence, see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#)).

Some sources stated that violence against Christians, particularly by Fulani armed groups, continue with impunity,<sup>696</sup> with the government reportedly failing to effectively protect Christian communities and punish perpetrators.<sup>697</sup> According to International Christian Concern (ICC), a US-based Christian organisation that provides advocacy and assistance to persecuted Christians worldwide, although Christian leaders have ‘repeatedly’ called for the government to provide greater protection and investigate attacks, poor road conditions, the difficulty of the terrain, and ‘the lack of rapid response mechanisms, hinder the ability of security agencies to prevent or contain violence against Christians’.<sup>698</sup>

## 2.12. Muslims in areas where they are a minority

Nigeria’s Muslim population accounts for 56.1 %, predominantly residing in the northern regions of the country, whereas Christians are primarily concentrated in the south<sup>699</sup> (see [2.11 Christians in areas where they are a minority](#)).

Within the context of intercommunal violence,<sup>700</sup> various incidents targeting Fulani Muslims have been reported during the reference period, including killings.<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> Pulse, FG tackles US over claims of Christian persecution by 2 Nigerian Catholic priests, 13 April 2025, [url](#). See also: Leadership, Federal Gov’t Dismisses Targeted Persecution Of Nigerian Christians, 12 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>694</sup> ORFA, How Fulani Militias Became Nigeria’s Deadliest Group While Escaping Global Notice, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>695</sup> Intersociety, Nigeria Headquartering 22 Islamic Terror Groups in Africa Seeking to Obliterate Christianity And Indigenous Cultural Heritage, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 3

<sup>696</sup> Hudson Institute, Conflict and Persecution in Nigeria: The Case for a CPC Designation, 12 March 2025, [url](#);

Catholic Register (The), Nigeria’s government complicit in Christian slaughter, priest says, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>697</sup> Open Doors, World Watch List 2025: Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>698</sup> ICC, 9 Killed in Attacks on Nigeria’s Christian Farming Communities, 6 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>699</sup> Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020, 9 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 49, 56, 113, 193

<sup>700</sup> Amnesty International, The State of the World’s Human Rights, Nigeria 2024, 29 April 2025, [url](#); FT, Nigeria’s spiralling rural violence heaps pressure on president, 27 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>701</sup> This Day, Bauchi Gov Pays Condolence Visit To Victims of Bandits’ Attack, Donates N100m, 17 May 2025, [url](#); SBM Intelligence, A threat to national stability, 27 March 2025, [url](#), pp. 18-19, 32



In 2024, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) launched a campaign against Fulani and criminal groups in South-East forests, reportedly dislodging more than 70 settlements. While many Igbos hailed the operation, it has faced criticism for targeting Muslim Fulani communities indiscriminately.<sup>702</sup> See for more information the [EUAA COI Report - Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#). A Nigerian senior security advisor told the EUAA that many Igbos view the cultural and religious differences between the predominantly Christian South-East and the largely Muslim north as irreconcilable, and that a ‘united Nigeria is unachievable.’ The same source noted that Igbos also view increasing southward migration of Fulani herders, driven by climate change and conflicts in the North, and ‘their deadly attacks on farming communities, as an existential threat.’<sup>703</sup>

In January 2025, sources reported that intentions to establish ‘Sharia panels’<sup>704</sup> in Ekiti and Oyo, South-West,<sup>705</sup> were met with resistance.<sup>706</sup> Vanguard reported that, according to Muslim leaders, these panels are part of their ‘right to self-determination’, while non-Muslim groups have expressed concerns about the ‘potential implications’.<sup>707</sup> The governor of Oyo, for example, indicated that the state will ‘uphold the laws and the Constitution of Nigeria’ and that the establishment of a sharia court in Oyo would require a bill by the House of the Assembly.<sup>708</sup> The Ekiti state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice indicated that the state did not recognise sharia law and that the current legal system based on customary law already handles legal issues in the state, including Islamic, Christian, and customary marriages.<sup>709</sup>

Punch reported that, according to the chief imam of Imo state, ‘activities of bandits and Boko Haram insurgents in the north are influencing various misconceptions held by the Igbo about Muslims’ in the South-East and that instances of discrimination in employment with state institutions reportedly occur.<sup>710</sup> The chief imam also indicated, without providing further details, that “[t]he Igbo don’t like marrying Muslims and they discourage anyone who wants to marry Muslims”.<sup>711</sup> The chief imam, however, ‘praised’ the governor of Imo state for sponsoring the trip to Mecca for 200 people for the 2023 *Hajj* pilgrimage.<sup>712</sup>

<sup>702</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>703</sup> Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

<sup>704</sup> A ‘Sharia panel’ is not a court but an ‘arbitration committee’ that handles civil matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and disputes over contractual agreements between Muslims. Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>705</sup> The Guardian, Sultan backs Sharia law in Oyo, Ekiti, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>706</sup> West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#); Daily Trust, Why Sharia panels are generating controversy in South-West, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>707</sup> Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>708</sup> Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Nigerian Tribune, EXPLAINER: ‘No religious group can create Sharia Court in South-West’, 30 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>709</sup> Daily Trust, Sharia panels: Discrimination against southern Muslims worries NSCIA, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>710</sup> Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>711</sup> Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>712</sup> Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)



## 2.13. Perceived Boko Haram members or supporters

Hundreds of Boko Haram/ISWAP fighters were killed in battles following insurgent attacks on military sites<sup>713</sup> or during security operations.<sup>714</sup> Within the context of the ongoing armed conflict in North-East Nigeria since 2009,<sup>715</sup> and within the context of ‘counterterrorism operations’, serious human rights violations perpetrated by the Nigerian security forces have been reported, including the use of ‘excessive force’, ‘extrajudicial killings, rape, torture and arbitrary detentions’ against suspected Boko Haram members.<sup>716</sup> Amnesty International also reported numerous deaths occurring in military custody.<sup>717</sup> Among those affected were elderly civilians escaping Boko Haram-controlled areas.<sup>718</sup> In December 2024, Amnesty International submitted a legal filing to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on behalf of several victims’ networks, urging an end to the ICC Prosecutor’s indefinite delay in opening a formal investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Nigeria. The filing reiterated allegations against the Nigerian military, including attacks on civilians, extrajudicial executions, torture, rape and enforced disappearances.<sup>719</sup> For more information on Nigerian security forces, including their *modus operandi* and violations see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

The Nigerian Security Forces have continued to detain children during security operations, screening procedures, and military raids, including outside IDP camps. Arrests were often based on alleged association with armed groups and information provided by informants. Some of these children were held with their mothers due to the mothers’ alleged links to ISWAP. All children arrested were subsequently released and systematically handed over to the Borno State Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development and received at the Bulumkutu transit centre in Maiduguri. From there, they were provided interim care and support prior to family reunification and reintegration into their communities.<sup>720</sup> Some of the children detained for alleged links to Boko Haram were as young as five, with infants also held alongside their mothers in harsh detention conditions. Boys returning from association with

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<sup>713</sup> International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch – Nigeria: January 2024 – August 2025, n.d., [url](#); AA, Nigerian army kills 60 Boko Haram terrorists after repelling attack on military base, 30 May 2025, [url](#); AA, Nigerian military says it killed 16 Boko Haram terrorists in northeastern Borno state, 24 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>714</sup> Al Jazeera, Nigeria says troops kill dozens of gunmen in northwest and northeast, 10 July 2025, [url](#); SARI Global, Weekly Update: Nigeria (July 4 - 10, 2025), 11 July 2025, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>715</sup> AI, Nigeria: Amnesty International petitions ICC judges to end Prosecutor’s delaying of justice for atrocity crimes, 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>716</sup> Okoye I. and Adejoh P., Human Rights Violations in Counter-Terrorism Efforts: A Qualitative Study of Victims Experiences in Nigeria, 13 March 2025, [url](#), pp. 78, 13-17

<sup>717</sup> AI, Nigeria: Amnesty International petitions ICC judges to end Prosecutor’s delaying of justice for atrocity crimes, 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>718</sup> In 2020, Amnesty International reported that since 2011, over 10 000 civilians have died in military custody, many at Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri, due to overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of food, water, and medical care. The organisation noted that even elderly civilians fleeing Boko Haram-controlled areas have been unlawfully detained or killed without evidence of involvement in violence. AI, Nigeria: Older people often an invisible casualty in conflict with Boko Haram, 8 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>719</sup> AI, Nigeria: Amnesty International petitions ICC judges to end Prosecutor’s delaying of justice for atrocity crimes, 2 December 2024, [url](#); AI, Nigeria: Submission to the International Criminal Court (ICC), 2 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>720</sup> UN, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict in Nigeria, 17 July 2024, [url](#), paras. 19, 20, 23



Boko Haram are reported to face greater discrimination than girls, due to the belief that they joined the group more willingly.<sup>721</sup>

Former Boko Haram affiliates face severe challenges to reintegrate. Many, especially women, have limited access to land, resources, and support; they remain displaced, unable to return home, and often experience multiple displacements. Lacking community support, they resort to negative coping strategies like food restriction, sex work, or selling firewood. Former affiliates are also targeted by Boko Haram as traitors, with men at risk of killing and women at risk of abduction and sexual violence. Insecure conditions force women to take dangerous risks to support their families, while gender-based violence remains a significant threat. Insecurity has also pushed former associates and communities across international borders, with some Nigerian former associates relocating to Cameroon to join family members in the Minawao refugee camp, amid ongoing security force scrutiny in Nigeria.<sup>722</sup>

In a 2024 report, Amnesty International revealed that between 2015 and mid-2023, girls and young women who escaped Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria suffered further abuse, including unlawful military detention due to their real or perceived association to Boko Haram. After fleeing captivity, many were detained by the Nigerian military, while others were left in overcrowded displacement camps with limited aid. Some were later 'reunited' with former Boko Haram captors in government transit camps, placing them at renewed risk of abuse.<sup>723</sup>

## 2.14. Individuals targeted by student cults

For background information on the phenomenon of 'cultism' in Nigeria, including the presence of student cults or confraternities across the country, their *modus operandi* and violations committed by these groups see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#).

Several communities in Nigeria have been affected by violent conflict linked to groups such as Black Axe, Eiye Confraternity, and Vikings, among others.<sup>724</sup> Originally formed as university-based confraternities, these groups have evolved into complex criminal networks operating well beyond campus environments. Their activities now include extortion, drug trafficking, cybercrime, and politically motivated violence. The South-South and South-West are the main hubs of gang violence in Nigeria. Northcentral states like Benue face violence from groups like Scavengers and Chain, while the North-East and North-West report few gang-related deaths.<sup>725</sup>

<sup>721</sup> Ladue, M. et al., Child-Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Reintegration Programmes, June 2025, [url](#), pp. 37, 75

<sup>722</sup> UNIDIR, Climate, Insecurity and Displacement: Triple Barriers to the Reintegration of Former Boko Haram Associates, March 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 23

<sup>723</sup> AI, "Help Us Build Our Lives": Girl Survivors of Boko Haram and Military Abuses in North-East Nigeria, 9 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 7-12

<sup>724</sup> Africa Report, Nigerian cult mafia groups and how they wreak havoc on society, 28 February 2025, [url](#); SBM Intel, Gangstar's Paradise. Nigeria's restive youth gang crisis, 2020-2025, July 2025, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 12, 14; Guardian (The), Bayelsa community live in fear as cult war intensifies. 23 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>725</sup> SBM Intel, Gangstar's Paradise. Nigeria's restive youth gang crisis, 2020-2025, July 2025, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 12, 14





Nigeria Watch reported that, in 2024, cult-related violence resulted in 328 fatalities, marking a slight decline from the 371 deaths recorded in 2023. Anambra State experienced the highest number of cult-related deaths with 88 reported cases, followed by Lagos and Rivers states. Confraternities such as Eiye and Aiye were active in Lagos, while groups including Debam, Deewell, Greenlanders, and Icelanders operated predominantly in the Niger Delta region. In Anambra State, cult activity was concentrated in the capital, Awka. On 31 March 2024, a cult clash in the Okpuno, Eke Akwa, and Obinagu areas of Awka led to the deaths of 13 individuals, including a staff member of the Anambra State Judiciary. Similarly, on 20 October 2024, another confrontation in the Nibo and Nodu-Okpuno communities of Awka South LGA resulted in 13 additional fatalities. Victims of student cults included not only rival cult members but also students and security personnel.<sup>726</sup>

Gang violence is mainly directed at rival members; however, civilians are often unintentionally affected, typically due to proximity, mistaken identity, or ties to intended targets. According to an analysis by SBM Intel, civilian fatalities represent 4.6 % of the total gang-related deaths between January 2020 and March 2025, indicating an unwritten rule among Nigerian gangs to refrain from killing non-combatants. Gang-related violence against civilians in Nigeria is largely concentrated in the southern region, with Rivers, Edo, and Lagos states being the most affected.<sup>727</sup> According to SBM Intel, most civilian casualties are incidental, rather than the result of deliberate targeting. Some groups, such as the Black Axe (Aiye) and the Icelanders have shown a particularly high rate of civilian fatalities.<sup>728</sup>

Cult groups typically recruit new members from universities and secondary schools.<sup>729</sup> Recruitment of youth and young adults is often driven by peer pressure, group dynamics and through the use of fear-based tactics, especially within educational institutions. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and social inequality in Nigeria have created a fertile environment for cult groups to thrive. For many individuals, joining a cult becomes a survival strategy in a society where legitimate pathways to success are limited.<sup>730</sup> Cult groups exploit the vulnerability of unemployed Nigerian and other African youths, who are easily susceptible to peer influence. They reportedly enforce permanent membership, with resistance punished by death.<sup>731</sup> For instance, Black Axe exploits vulnerable populations in Nigeria, as well as vulnerable members of the Nigerian diaspora (see also [2.2.6. Men victims of trafficking](#)), particularly young men. It employs young, low-level gang members, known as 'streets', to fight over territory, control illicit markets, and steal oil from pipelines.<sup>732</sup>

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<sup>726</sup> Nigeria Watch, Fourteenth Report on Violence 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>727</sup> SBM Intel, Gangstar's Paradise. Nigeria's restive youth gang crisis, 2020-2025, July 2025, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 12, 14

<sup>728</sup> SBM Intel, Gangstar's Paradise. Nigeria's restive youth gang crisis, 2020-2025, July 2025, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 12, 14

<sup>729</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Black Axe—Nigeria's Most Notorious Transnational Criminal Organization, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>730</sup> Odesanmi A. F, et al., Sociocultural Perspective of Cultism in Nigeria: A Social Vulture of Individuals and Societies, October 2024, [url](#), pp. 158, 175

<sup>731</sup> Africa Report (The), Nigerian cult mafia groups and how they wreak havoc on society, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>732</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Black Axe—Nigeria's Most Notorious Transnational Criminal Organization, 29 October 2024, [url](#)





National media sources reported on a rise in the recruitment of children by cult groups during the reference period.<sup>733</sup> During a public event that took place in Kwara State in 2024, the Kwara State Commissioner of Police said that a student had been ‘recently’ killed for refusing to join cultism.<sup>734</sup> Groups reportedly use aggressive tactics to recruit students, with an increasingly early age at which they are being drawn into cultism. States such as Rivers, Bayelsa, Ogun, Delta, and Edo have become hotspots for cult-related activities, with secondary schools increasingly serving as breeding grounds for future cult members.<sup>735</sup>

## 2.15. Individuals refusing chieftaincy titles

National media reported that traditional rulers hold various titles according to their respective ethnic groups. Among the Yoruba, prominent titles include Ooni of Ife, Alaafin of Oyo, and Oba of Lagos, each symbolising spiritual leadership and ancestral authority. The Oba of Benin in the Edo State leads the Edo people and is revered for preserving the heritage of the ancient Benin Kingdom. The Olu of Warri is the monarch of the Itsekiri people in Delta State, while the Igbo recognise leaders such as the Obi of Onitsha and the Obi of Nnewi. In the South-East, the Obong of Calabar heads the Efik Kingdom and plays a significant role in cultural and community affairs. Each title carries not only ceremonial value but also social and cultural influence within Nigerian society. In northern Nigeria, Islamic titles such as Sultan of Sokoto and Emir of Kano denote religious and traditional leadership within the Hausa-Fulani communities.<sup>736</sup> National media widely announced new chiefs during 2024 and 2025.<sup>737</sup> Although ‘women are rarely given chieftaincy titles by traditional rulers’, a cultural shift is taking place with recent nominations, including in Abba in 2023<sup>738</sup> and in Lagos in 2025.<sup>739</sup>

On 21 June 2024, the Supreme Court of Nigeria addressed a dispute over traditional chieftaincy rankings in Erinmope-Ekiti, affirming that a chieftaincy declaration can be set aside if it conflicts with tradition, lacks legal basis, or results from bias or procedural unfairness.<sup>740</sup>

While most individuals in Nigeria accept chieftaincy titles with pride, some decline them due to religious convictions, personal or professional obligations, or incompatibility with modern lifestyles. Although refusal is generally permitted without legal or formal repercussions, social pressure may arise within families or communities, particularly in hereditary cases, with rare

<sup>733</sup> Nation (The), Teen killers on the prowl: Tragic rise of Nigeria’s child cultists, 8 September 2024, [url](#); Punch, Rise of child cultists turning schools into battlefields (2), 16 February 2025, [url](#). In 2021, the death of a 12-year-old student at a Lagos school, allegedly tortured by senior students for refusing to join a cult group, reignited discussions about the spread of cultism in secondary schools. See Punch, Rise of child cultists turning schools into battlefields (2), 16 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>734</sup> Daily Trust, Cultists having a field day in Kwara, 22 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>735</sup> Punch, Rise of child cultists turning schools into battlefields (2), 16 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>736</sup> Punch, 10 most powerful Kings in Nigeria and their titles, 6 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>737</sup> Premium Times, Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, installs new chiefs, 9 June 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, Osun State Government, Osun Govt Approves new king of Olojudo of Ido Ajegunle and Five Others, Elevates Seven to Part Two Chiefs, 29 January 2025, [url](#); Vanguard, Agadangba Kingdom honours Dorsey as Yeye Oge, 26 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>738</sup> Punch, Chimamanda’s chieftaincy title signifies cultural revolution, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>739</sup> NAN, First Lady receives chieftaincy title in Lagos, pledges continued service, August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>740</sup> LawPavilion, Chieftaincy Declaration Can Be Set Aside, 6 August 2024, [url](#)



instances of coercion or social exclusion.<sup>741</sup> In southern and central Nigeria, refusing a chief priest or shaman title when hereditary or spiritually conferred, may lead to social or spiritual consequences, such as exclusion from community life, family pressure, or fear of offending deities. However, physical coercion is 'rare', and many refusals, especially by Christians and Muslims, are increasingly accepted due to the decline of traditional religions.<sup>742</sup> In Edo state, in South South Nigeria, when an heir refuses to ascend the throne automatically forfeits both his right to the throne and his entitlement to inherit the property of his late father, the Onojie. In such cases, the selection of a new Onojie is entrusted to the discretion of the kingmakers (designated quarters or families whose elders traditionally serve as the kingmakers).<sup>743</sup>

In correspondence with EUAA, Prof. David Pratten<sup>744</sup> explained that refusing chieftaincy titles is uncommon in Nigeria. While some cases exist, the expert had not documented any cases. Given the status and remuneration of such roles, there are usually multiple willing candidates. Known consequences for refusal tend to be limited to rumour or social shaming. Individuals usually refuse chieftaincy titles due to religious convictions. In Southern Nigeria, this often concerns Pentecostal Christians rejecting roles like village headship, which may involve rituals such as libation to ancestral spirits. In South-Eastern Igbo-speaking communities, churches frequently oppose traditional practices, contributing to tensions. Nonetheless, many Christians have accepted chieftaincy roles and sought compromises on ceremonial elements. Tensions between Christianity and traditional office-holding are longstanding, and recent shifts appear minimal. In most communities, refusal is likely to be respected, and sometimes even admired.<sup>745</sup>

Prof. Pratten further noted that chieftaincy roles can be risky, however dangers - such as accusations of embezzlement or conflict with local youth - typically follow acceptance, rather than refusal of office.<sup>746</sup> The source added that different set of pressures to accept the titles may apply to roles associated with shrines or deities, rather than the more bureaucratic forms of office tied to administrative units such as villages, clans, local government areas, or ethnic groups. In such cases, individuals may be viewed as predestined to hold positions that might be translated in English as 'shrine priest', and therefore subject to greater expectations to

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<sup>741</sup> Canada, IRB, Nigeria: Chieftaincy in Yorubaland and rituals, including human sacrifice and blood rituals upon initiation to chieftaincy or during chieftaincy; reaction of state ministries of chieftaincy affairs to Yoruba chief rituals, including whether reaction varies by state; prevalence and consequences of refusing a Yoruba chieftaincy title; protection available to those who refuse such a title (2019–October 2021), 12 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>742</sup> Canada, IRB, Nigeria: Consequences for a person refusing a chief priest or a shaman [also called fetish priest] title for which they have been selected in south and central Nigeria; state protection (2019–October 2021) [NGA200792.FE ], 12 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>743</sup> Itua, P. O., Succession Under Customary Law in Nigeria. The Rule of Primogeniture versus the Deposition of a Traditional Ruler (Onojie) in Edo State: A critique of the Provisions of the Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edicts No 16 of 1979, 25 September 2019, [url](#), pp. 20, 50

<sup>744</sup> David Pratten is an Associate Professor in the Social Anthropology of Africa at University of Oxford. His research is based on a long-term engagement with Annang villagers in south-eastern Nigeria and focuses on themes of history, violence and the state. The focus of his initial work was an historical ethnography of colonialism which focused on the events surrounding a series of mysterious deaths in south-eastern Nigeria during the late 1940s. More recently his research has examined issues of youth, democracy and disorder in post-colonial Nigeria with a particular focus on vigilantism and new masquerade performances.

<sup>745</sup> Pratten D., email communication with EUAA, 29 July 2025

<sup>746</sup> Pratten D., email communication with EUAA, 29 July 2025



accept the role. However, the extent of the pressure involved - beyond mild social sanctions - remains unclear in the absence of further evidence.<sup>747</sup>

Recent examples of individuals refusing chieftaincy titles in Nigeria include Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, who declined such honours in June 2025 during his tenure to allow for unbiased public assessment of his performance.<sup>748</sup> Similarly, Valentine Chineto Ozigbo, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate in Anambra State, declined the title 'Enyi Oma Anaocha' offered by the Anaocha Traditional Ruling Council, citing concerns over potential politicisation and a desire to uphold the integrity of the traditional institution.<sup>749</sup> No consequences were reported for refusal.<sup>750</sup>

## 2.16. Individuals with disabilities, especially mental health illness

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018<sup>751</sup> prohibits disability-based discrimination and imposes penalties including fines and prison sentences for violations.<sup>752</sup> However, its enforcement is weak, driven by limited public awareness.<sup>753</sup> As of July 2025, 23 out of 36 states have enacted their own disability laws.<sup>754</sup> Persons with disabilities, especially those in rural<sup>755</sup> or conflict-affected areas,<sup>756</sup> face significant marginalisation, with limited access to essential services like education, health, employment and transportation, compounded by stigma and discrimination.<sup>757</sup> Women and girls with disabilities face discrimination in accessing health –including sexual, reproductive health and

<sup>747</sup> Pratten D., email communication with EUAA, 29 July 2025

<sup>748</sup> Nation (The), Why I don't take chieftaincy titles – Makinde, 1 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>749</sup> Authority (The), Why I rejected chieftaincy title – Ozigbo, 7 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>750</sup> Authority (The), Why I rejected chieftaincy title – Ozigbo, 7 October 2023, [url](#); Nation (The), Why I don't take chieftaincy titles – Makinde, 1 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>751</sup> Nigeria, Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, 21 January 2019, [url](#)

<sup>752</sup> HRW, Nigeria Passes Disability Rights Law, 25 January 2019, [url](#)

<sup>753</sup> Premium Times, INVESTIGATION: Nigerians with disabilities experience discrimination despite existing laws, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Brief, July 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>754</sup> Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Brief, July 2025, [url](#), p. 3; Dialogue Earth, In northern Nigeria, floods impact disabled people most, 19 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>755</sup> Ofuani-Sokolo, A. I. and Monye, O., Engendering financial inclusion for persons with disabilities in Nigeria, March 2025, [url](#), p. 119, 125; Cable (The), Mohammed Isa seeks inclusive programmes for PWDs in rural areas, 11 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>756</sup> DRC, How DRC supports Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria to reclaim their rights and dignity, 12 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>757</sup> Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Full Report, May 2025, [url](#), pp. 48-49;



maternal health<sup>758</sup> and education.<sup>759</sup> They are at higher risk of gender-based violence,<sup>760</sup> and encounter significant barriers to justice due to stigma, poverty and inaccessible services.<sup>761</sup>

For more information on access to healthcare systems, including for specific profiles, see [3.7 Healthcare](#). For information regarding access and availability of medical treatment, see [EUAA Medical Country of Origin Information \(MedCOI\) Report: Nigeria, April 2022](#).

In January 2023, the National Mental Health Act 2021<sup>762</sup> passed into law, replacing the 1958 Lunacy Act.<sup>763</sup> The new law introduces certain safeguards for individuals with mental health conditions, such as granting them the ability to take part in decisions about their treatment.<sup>764</sup> It also prohibits the use of chains on individuals with mental health issues and seeks to enhance access to care by expanding services available within communities. However, the law still allows involuntary treatment and other coercive practices, including physical restraints and isolation.<sup>765</sup>

Nigeria is currently facing a ‘mental health crisis’<sup>766</sup> due to a lack of access to mental healthcare services, exacerbated by factors like social stigma, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of mental health professionals.<sup>767</sup> Mental health system in the country remains under-resourced.<sup>768</sup> Despite a population of over 200 million, Nigeria has around 150 psychiatrists,<sup>769</sup> with many considering or actively planning to emigrate due to poor working conditions, low income, limited career prospects, and societal stigma surrounding mental health.<sup>770</sup> In addition, there is a shortage of neurologists, with many newly trained professionals leaving to work abroad. There are approximately five psychiatric nurses per 100 000 people, and even fewer other mental and neurological health professionals, such as clinical psychologists, social

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<sup>758</sup> Nigeria Health Watch, Nigeria’s Health System Must Eliminate Obstacles to Maternal Care for Women with Disabilities, 17 March 2025, [url](#); Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Full Report, May 2025, [url](#), pp. 49-50

<sup>759</sup> Edugist, The Forgotten Girls: Addressing the Educational Needs of Girls with Disabilities in Nigeria, 23 October 2024, [url](#); Inclusive News Network, 61% of women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria lack basic computer skills, 18 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>760</sup> Centre for Disability and Inclusion Africa, Gender-based violence against women with disabilities in Nigeria, 13 February 2024, [url](#); Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Full Report, May 2025, [url](#), pp. 49-50

<sup>761</sup> Global Disability Fund, Situational Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria, Country Full Report, May 2025, [url](#), pp. 49-50

<sup>762</sup> Nigeria, National Mental Health, 30 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>763</sup> HRW, World Report 2024 – Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Adepaju, V. A., Breaking the Chains: Nigeria’s New Mental Health Law and its Impacts on Care and Rights, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>764</sup> Premium Times, Buhari signs mental health bill after two failed attempts, 11 January 2023, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>765</sup> HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>766</sup> Center for Policy Impact in Global Health (The), Exploring common mental health problems among Nigerian adolescents: identified challenges and recommendations for the future, 3 September 2024, [url](#); Nweke, S. C. et al., Problems and critical reforms in mental health care: an examination of Nigeria’s situation, November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>767</sup> Nweke, S. C. et al., Problems and critical reforms in mental health care: an examination of Nigeria’s situation, November 2024, [url](#); Medical Research Foundation, Urgent action needed to address migration of psychiatrists out of Nigeria, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>768</sup> Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025

<sup>769</sup> Chijioke, O. C. et al., Barriers and Attitudes towards Mental Health Services in Nigeria: A Systematic Review, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Premium Times, Less than 200 psychiatrists attend to all Nigerians, 28 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>770</sup> Medical Research Foundation, Urgent action needed to address migration of psychiatrists out of Nigeria, 10 June 2024, [url](#)



workers, neuro-physiotherapists, and occupational therapists.<sup>771</sup> Infrastructures for mental health patients are inadequate, struggling to cope with increasing demand and chronic underfunding.<sup>772</sup>

In response to limited access, digital health platforms are emerging as lifelines. Initiatives like Awadoc, MindMentor, Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative (MANI), and She Writes Woman<sup>773</sup> provide virtual therapy, peer support, and mental health education. However, challenges such as poor internet access, high data costs, and the lack of national policy integration limit their reach, particularly in underserved communities.<sup>774</sup>

Prevailing stigma associated with mental illness<sup>775</sup> prevent individuals from seeking treatment.<sup>776</sup> People with mental health conditions are often targeted by mobs ‘that use their disabilities to make false accusations against victims and to justify lynching them’.<sup>777</sup> The Advocacy for Alleged Witches (AfAW)<sup>778</sup> raised alarm about the frequent accusation of witchcraft or demonic possession against people with mental illness. When accused of such acts, people with mental health challenges are often ‘shunned, beaten, tortured, or killed.’<sup>779</sup> See [2.17. Individuals accused of witchcraft](#) for more information.

Furthermore, a 2024 study on stigma and healthcare in Nigeria found that the widespread stigma associated with mental illness contributes significantly to the underreporting of cases and the chronic underfunding of mental health services. Misconceptions and cultural myths about mental disorders further fuel rising rates of suicide, substance abuse, and long-term psychiatric conditions across the country.<sup>780</sup>

Trafficking victims in Nigeria face severe psychosocial impacts, but support services are limited and often overlooked in reintegration programs.<sup>781</sup> For more information see [2.2.7. Return and long-term reintegration of victims of trafficking](#).

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<sup>771</sup> Chijioke, O. C. et al., Barriers and Attitudes towards Mental Health Services in Nigeria: A Systematic Review, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>772</sup> BMJ Global Health, Mind the widening gap: A trauma-driven mental health crisis in Nigeria, 26 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>773</sup> She Writes Woman is a Nigerian women-led movement that challenges stigma, advocates for rights, and creates safe support for people with mental health conditions. See She Writes Woman, Nothing About Us Without Us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>774</sup> Nation (The), Nigeria’s youth mental health crisis in numbers, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>775</sup> BMJ Global Health, Mind the widening gap: A trauma-driven mental health crisis in Nigeria, 26 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>776</sup> Chijioke, O. C. et al., Barriers and Attitudes towards Mental Health Services in Nigeria: A Systematic Review, 15 July 2024, [url](#), p. 15; IACAPAP, Bulletin, June 2025, [url](#), p.32

<sup>777</sup> Al, Nigeria: Escalation of Mob Violence Emboldens Impunity, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>778</sup> AfAW, About, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>779</sup> This Day, Mental Health, Witchcraft and Demonic Possession, 12 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>780</sup> Ogbonna, C. K. et al., Addressing stigma to achieve healthcare equity and universal health coverage in Nigeria, 11 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>781</sup> Adeyinka S., online interview with EUAA, 16 July 2025



## 2.17. Individuals accused of witchcraft

Nigeria's Criminal Code (Sections 210–213)<sup>782</sup> and Penal Code (Sections 207–209)<sup>783</sup> prohibit witchcraft-related acts, including self-identification as a witch, accusations of witchcraft, and use of charms or *juju*.<sup>784</sup> A recent witchcraft-related case in Bauchi State sparked legal debate over the treatment of such cases under state law. During judicial proceedings, the Chief Judge of Bauchi State expressed concerns about the growing number of witchcraft accusations, stating that such cases are difficult to prove and often rely on confession. The Chief Judge remarked that 'If you are not a witch, you cannot identify as one'.<sup>785</sup> Prominent human rights advocate Leo Igwe<sup>786</sup> criticised the statement as legally baseless and harmful, warning it could promote witch-hunting. Igwe noted that ambiguity surrounding witchcraft in Nigerian law continues to fuel harmful beliefs and practices. He clarified that Nigerian law does not criminalise witchcraft itself but instead prohibits accusations under laws such as Section 210 of the Criminal Code, urging the judiciary to rely on evidence-based reasoning and reject superstition to uphold justice and human rights.<sup>787</sup>

Amnesty International found that incidents involving individuals accused of witchcraft revealed consistent patterns of discrimination against women and children.<sup>788</sup> In 2024, the same source documented an escalation of mob violence against individuals accused of witchcraft, many of whom were 'beaten, tortured, or killed', including numerous cases involving women.<sup>789</sup> Individuals with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities were more exposed to mob violence, often accused of witchcraft or labelled as wizards. Their behavioural symptoms, such as confusion or silence, were frequently misinterpreted as signs of guilt, making them easy targets for attacks.<sup>790</sup> According to National media, widows experiencing mental health challenges following the loss of their spouses were particularly vulnerable to witchcraft accusations.<sup>791</sup> The UN Security Council reported cases of women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, in particular older women, being killed in North-East Nigeria due to accusations of witchcraft.<sup>792</sup>

Epilepsy in many African communities, especially in Nigeria and Cameroon, is often associated with witchcraft, demonic possession, or curses.<sup>793</sup> These superstitions result in people with epilepsy, particularly women, being stigmatised, isolated, and subjected to traditional rituals

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<sup>782</sup> Nigeria, Criminal Code Act, 1 June 1916, [url](#)

<sup>783</sup> Nigeria, Act No. 25 of 1960, Penal Code (Northern State) Federal Provisions Act, 30 December 1960, [url](#)

<sup>784</sup> 247ureports, Witchcraft Law and Jurisprudence in Anambra State by Mr. Enemu CC, Esq., 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>785</sup> Sun (The), Alkassim backs Bauchi Chief Judge, says Nigerian laws recognise witchcraft, 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>786</sup> AfAW, About, 21 June 2024, [url](#); Humanists International, Leo Igwe, 6 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>787</sup> Modern Ghana, Is Witchcraft Justiciable Under Nigerian Law?, 18 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>788</sup> AI, Instantly killed! How law enforcement failures exacerbate Nigeria's wave of mob violence, October 2024, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>789</sup> AI, Nigeria: Escalation of mob violence emboldens impunity, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>790</sup> AI, Instantly killed! How law enforcement failures exacerbate Nigeria's wave of mob violence, October 2024, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>791</sup> Punch, Echoes of village widows lynched over witchcraft allegation, 30 November 2024, [url](#); Nation (The), Witch-hunt of widows, 13 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>792</sup> UN, Security Council, Protection of civilians in armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General [S/2024/385], 14 May 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>793</sup> Guardian (The), The 'epilepsy warriors' breaking down the barriers in Cameroon, 3 April 2024, [url](#); IPS, Epilepsy Patients in Africa Fight Stigma and Neglect, 19 March 2025, [url](#)



instead of receiving medical care. Widespread belief in witchcraft deters families from seeking medical help, reinforcing stigma and discrimination. The stigma is so severe that some are denied education, employment, or marriage, and many women face abuse or rejection within their families and communities.<sup>794</sup>

Witch-related accusations often lead to humiliation as well as assault, or death. In April 2024, a teenage girl and her father in Benue State were accused of witchcraft and forced by a community mob to sit near a fire until she falsely confessed. The victim was eventually rescued, and legal proceedings were initiated, although one alleged perpetrator remained at large.<sup>795</sup> In July 2024, a 75-year-old widow in Edo State was publicly assaulted by a traditional leader over witchcraft allegations. The attack caused serious facial injuries, while bystanders did not intervene and a witness's attempt to film it was suppressed.<sup>796</sup> In August 2024, a 33-year-old man was beaten by a mob in Benue State after being accused of making a boy's penis disappear through witchcraft. The victim lost his job due to the stigma, and a video of the attack later circulated on social media.<sup>797</sup> Such claims are often linked to Koro syndrome, a psychiatric condition involving the fear of genital disappearance.<sup>798</sup>

Religious beliefs and cultural practices also contribute significantly to the persistence of witchcraft accusations.<sup>799</sup> On 30 August 2024, a church in Imo State advertised a deliverance service with the slogan 'That Witch Must Die.' Despite efforts to stop the event, including petitions and media articles, the event took place.<sup>800</sup>

Although Nigerian law prohibits accusing someone of witchcraft, prosecutions and convictions are rare.<sup>801</sup> Nigerian authorities have reportedly failed to carry out effective investigations or implement safeguards, especially in rural areas where women are often targeted to settle personal or family disputes.<sup>802</sup> On 4 December 2024, the Jigawa State High Court sentenced four relatives to death for the murder of a neighbour they had accused of practicing witchcraft.<sup>803</sup> In 3 February 2025, five men in Kano State were sentenced to death for killing a 67-year-old woman they accused of witchcraft.<sup>804</sup> These cases drew national attention and highlighted the dangers of superstition-driven violence,<sup>805</sup> 'with many expressing mixed feelings about the cultural and legal implications'.<sup>806</sup>

<sup>794</sup> IPS, Epilepsy Patients in Africa Fight Stigma and Neglect, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>795</sup> Daily Trust, How We Were Forced To Confess To Witchcraft – Victims, 22 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>796</sup> Punch, Echoes of village widows lynched over witchcraft allegations, 30 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>797</sup> BBC News, The man battling Nigeria's 'witch-hunters', 26 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>798</sup> HumAngle, Separating Fact from Fiction In Nigeria's Genital Theft Frenzy, 2 January 2024, [url](#); BBC News, The man battling Nigeria's 'witch-hunters', 26 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>799</sup> Punch, Echoes of village widows lynched over witchcraft allegations, 30 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>800</sup> BBC News, The man battling Nigeria's 'witch-hunters', 26 October 2024, [url](#); Nation (The), Imo's 'That witch must die' event, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>801</sup> BBC News, The man battling Nigeria's 'witch-hunters', 26 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>802</sup> AI, Nigeria: Escalation of mob violence emboldens impunity, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>803</sup> Premium Times, Court sentences four family members to death for killing alleged witch, 5 December 2024, [url](#);

ChannelsTV, Jigawa Court Sentences Four to Death For Culpable Homicide, 4 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>804</sup> Punch, Five sentenced to death for killing woman accused of witchcraft, 3 February 2025, [url](#); BBC NEWS, Five sentenced to death in Nigeria over 'witchcraft' murder, 4 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>805</sup> BBC News, Five sentenced to death in Nigeria over 'witchcraft' murder, 4 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>806</sup> ChannelsTV, Jigawa Court Sentences Four to Death For Culpable Homicide, 4 December 2024, [url](#)



## 2.18. State response towards human rights violations

### 2.18.1. Justice system

Nigeria's legal system is a mix of English common law, law in northern states, and traditional law.<sup>807</sup> The highest court is the Supreme Court, which consists of the chief justice and a number of justices not exceeding 21.<sup>808</sup> The subordinate courts consist of the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Court, state High Courts, Sharia Court of Appeal, Customary Court of Appeal, and state court system similar in structure to federal system.<sup>809</sup> Sharia courts are only located in the 12 Northern states where sharia law is applied (Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara).<sup>810</sup> Most southern states use the provisions of the Criminal Code Act as their state law.<sup>811</sup> In the 12 Northern states where sharia law is applied, the Sharia Penal Code is applied.<sup>812</sup>

Judicial independence is constitutionally and legally enshrined, and while the judiciary has some degree of independence and professionalism, political interference, corruption, and lack of equipment and training remain key problems.<sup>813</sup> Sources indicated that the judiciary was susceptible to pressure from the executive and legislative branches,<sup>814</sup> and business interests.<sup>815</sup>

Corruption is a serious problem in Nigeria's justice system.<sup>816</sup> A July 2024 report by UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on corruption in Nigeria indicated that the largest cash bribes paid to public officials were for judges and magistrates, with an average of 31 000 Naira (17 Euros), followed by customs or immigration officials (17 800 Naira or 10 Euros), and members of the armed forces (16 600 Naira or 9 Euros).<sup>817</sup> According to the same source, bribes in Nigeria are usually requested by public officials either explicitly, indirectly, or through third parties who convey the expectation of a bribe.<sup>818</sup> Bribes are also offered voluntarily to 'expedite' a process or to express 'appreciation if they feel that [it] would help them get the required services faster'.<sup>819</sup> Nigerian newspaper The Guardian reported that it is common

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<sup>807</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 13 August 2025, [url](#); Miles, J., Customary and Islamic Law and its Development in Africa, 2006, [url](#), p. 105

<sup>808</sup> Nigeria, FJSC, The Nigerian Supreme Court, n.d., [url](#); see also: US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 13 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>809</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 13 August 2025, [url](#); Commonwealth Governance, Judicial System of Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>810</sup> ILGA World, ILGA Database: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), MURIC advocates Shari'ah courts for Muslims in southern Nigeria, 8 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>811</sup> ILGA World, ILGA Database: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>812</sup> ILGA World, ILGA Database: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); HRW, World Report 2025 (Events of 2024), Nigeria, 16 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>813</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>814</sup> HEDA, Nigeria's Judiciary Faces Credibility Crisis: HEDA's Latest LAR Report Calls for Urgent Reform, 10 June 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>815</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>816</sup> UNODC, Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and trends, July 2024, [url](#), p. 72; Guardian (The), NBS-UNODC Report: When corruption stench taints temple of justice, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>817</sup> UNODC, Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and trends, July 2024, [url](#), p. 72

<sup>818</sup> UNODC, Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and trends, July 2024, [url](#), p. 78

<sup>819</sup> UNODC, Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and trends, July 2024, [url](#), p. 78



practice for judicial workers to solicit a ‘gratification’ at different points of the judicial case, from filing a case to the assignment to a judge.<sup>820</sup> The same source reported that ‘[h]ardly a court clerk or registrar locates a file for a litigant, or lawyer without being gratified’, and that judicial clerks are reported to deliberately delay the filing of cases or misplace files and exhibits with the aim of extorting parties, as well as to solicit bribes under the false pretext of acting on behalf of judges.<sup>821</sup> In an effort to combat bribery in the justice system, in October 2024, President Tinubu signed legislation to increase judicial officers’ salaries by 300 %.<sup>822</sup>

A 2025 poll by the Africa Polling Institute (API) indicated that 79 % of respondents have ‘little to no trust’ in the judicial system.<sup>823</sup> Similarly, a 2025 nationwide survey of 1 357 Nigerians published by the Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA), an NGO that promotes human rights and conducts research on human development issues, indicated that corruption, inaccessibility to the justice system, and political interference in the judiciary are ‘widespread’, and that only 12 % of the respondents rated the judiciary as ‘highly accessible’.<sup>824</sup>

Federal and state authorities are accused of disregarding due process.<sup>825</sup> In some cases, people are detained without being informed of the charges against them or allowing them access to counsel, and those who are detained by the military under terrorism charges are not accorded the right to legal representation, due process, or be heard by a judicial authority.<sup>826</sup> The prolonged pretrial detention of suspects sometimes continue even after courts have ordered their release on bail.<sup>827</sup> Also, some individuals whose cases are dismissed by the courts reportedly remain in detention without clear legal justification.<sup>828</sup>

Sharia courts accord less weight to the testimony of women and non-Muslims, and to prove adultery or fornication, some sharia courts allow different evidentiary requirements for women and men defendants.<sup>829</sup> Similarly, Akinwale Victor Ishola, researcher at the Department of Peace, Security and Humanitarian Studies at the University of Ibadan, indicated that ‘gender inequality under Sharia law impacts women’s rights and social status adversely, hindering progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in Northern Nigeria’.<sup>830</sup>

<sup>820</sup> Guardian (The), NBS-UNODC Report: When corruption stench taints temple of justice, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>821</sup> Guardian (The), NBS-UNODC Report: When corruption stench taints temple of justice, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>822</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>823</sup> API, API Releases 2025 Social Cohesion Report, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>824</sup> HEDA, Nigeria’s Judiciary Faces Credibility Crisis: HEDA’s Latest LAR Report Calls for Urgent Reform, 10 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>825</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>826</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>827</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>828</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>829</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>830</sup> Ishola, A. V., Religious Blasphemy, Jungle Justice, and Legal Pluralism in Northern Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Sharia Law. African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration, 2024, 2024, [url](#), p. 73



## 2.18.2. Overview of legal framework and mechanisms in place

Chapter IV of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of citizens,<sup>831</sup> including the rights to ‘life’, ‘dignity of human person’, ‘personal liberty’, ‘fair hearing’, ‘private and family life’, ‘thought, conscience and religion’, and ‘acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria’, as well as freedom of ‘expression and the press’, ‘peaceful assembly and association’, ‘movement’, and from ‘discrimination’.<sup>832</sup>

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups monitoring or investigating human rights conditions or cases and publishing their findings generally operated without government restriction.<sup>833</sup> However, sources indicated that members of some organisations faced intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram,<sup>834</sup> or encountered obstacles when investigating alleged human rights violations committed by security forces.<sup>835</sup>

### National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

In 2010, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established through the National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Act, 2010, which conferred on the NHRC

‘additional independence and strengthened the Commission’s power with respect to promotion and protection of human rights, investigation of alleged violation of human rights and enforcement of decisions. The Amendment Act has also widened the scope of the Commission’s Mandate to include vetting of legislations at all levels to ensure their compliance with human rights norms’.<sup>836</sup>

Complaints can be filed by ‘individuals whose rights have been violated or threatened, or by a proxy, acting on their joint behalf’.<sup>837</sup> The NHRC also initiates investigations of its own accord when it has knowledge of an abuse or human rights violation.<sup>838</sup> The NHRC website indicated that complaints can be filed by individuals or a group of individuals, via online, a mobile application, email, WhatsApp, telephone, or physically at any of the NHRC’s helpdesks located in each state.<sup>839</sup>

In 2024, the NHRC received over 2.08 million complaints,<sup>840</sup> and in June 2025, it received 327 154 complaints, mostly related to ‘law enforcement and human dignity’ (84 333 complaints), ‘freedom from discrimination’ (81 147), and ‘rule of law and access to justice’

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<sup>831</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>832</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (amended 2023), [url](#)

<sup>833</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>834</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>835</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>836</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC mandate, n.d., [url](#); See also: Nigeria, National Human Rights Commission (Amendment), Act 2010, 2010, [url](#), Part II

<sup>837</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, 2022 Annual Report, May 2023, [url](#), 35

<sup>838</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, 2022 Annual Report, May 2023, [url](#), 35

<sup>839</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, Make a complaint, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>840</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC 2024 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, 28 January 2025, [url](#)



(30 542).<sup>841</sup> Most complaints were filed in the North Central (137 179 complaints), North West (67 220), and North East (63 743).<sup>842</sup> The USDOS 2023 report indicated that the NHRC has investigated ‘allegations of human rights abuses and published periodic reports detailing its findings, including torture and poor prison conditions’, and that observers have considered the NHRC as ‘independent and somewhat effective, but the commission could not compel the government to prosecute perpetrators of human rights abuses’.<sup>843</sup> Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

### **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice (CCJ)**

The ECOWAS CCJ, of which Nigeria is a part, ‘has jurisdiction to hear human rights cases and expands the admissibility rules to include disputes between individuals and their own member states’.<sup>844</sup> Decisions made by the CCJ are ‘final and binding’ and member states are required ‘to execute the judgment according to its national courts’.<sup>845</sup> Sources indicated, however, that CCJ rulings are largely disregarded by members states, including Nigeria.<sup>846</sup>

In July 2024, the CCJ ruled that the federal government violated the rights of protesters during the 2020 EndSARS demonstrations against the police, and ordered compensation for claimants whose rights had been breached.<sup>847</sup> On 9 April 2025, the CCJ delivered a ruling against blasphemy laws in Nigeria, declaring certain provisions of the Kano State Penal Code and the Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law (2000) in violation of international human rights standards, particularly the right to freedom of expression, and ordered the federal government to repeal or amend the law to comply with its international obligations.<sup>848</sup> Additional information on the status of these cases could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

### **2.18.3. Law enforcement**

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the principal law enforcement agency in the country; it is deployed in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.<sup>849</sup> The NPF is under the Ministry of Police Affairs.<sup>850</sup> Police abuse is investigated by a number of agencies within the force:

- the Police Public Complaints Committee (PPCC), which investigates complaints of human rights abuses by police officers and forwards reports to the Police Service Commission for appropriate disciplinary action;<sup>851</sup>

<sup>841</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC June 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>842</sup> Nigeria, NHRC, NHRC June 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>843</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>844</sup> Open Society Foundations, ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>845</sup> Open Society Foundations, ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, n.d., [url](#); Punch, ECOWAS Court faults member states over poor compliance with rulings, 26 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>846</sup> Punch, Concerns over relevance of ECOWAS Court as member nations disregard judgments, 23 December 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), Concerns over 22% enforcement of ECOWAS Court judgments, 24 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>847</sup> JuristNews, ECOWAS court rules Nigeria violated human rights during October 2020 protests, 11 July 2024, [url](#); Amnesty International, The State of the World’s Human Rights: Nigeria, April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>848</sup> Open Doors, Nigeria’s blasphemy laws must be repealed, orders court, 23 April 2025, [url](#); ICC, Court Declares Nigeria’s Blasphemy Laws Violate International Human Rights Standards, 14 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>849</sup> Nigeria, POSSAP, About, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>850</sup> Nigeria, Ministry of Police Affairs, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>851</sup> Nigeria, PPCC, About PPCC, n.d., [url](#)



- the Police Complaint Response Unit (CRU), which receives and resolves complaints against police officers including cases of abuse, corruption, and unethical behaviour;<sup>852</sup> and
- the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), which investigates and prosecutes ‘serious and complex criminal cases’, including those involving misconduct within the force.<sup>853</sup>

The NPF has between 370 000 and 400 000 police officers, which is considered well below the UN recommended number for the size of the population.<sup>854</sup> According to the Inspector General of the Police, the NPF needs at least 190 000 additional officers, although the proper number for ‘effective policing’ is around 2.5 million personnel.<sup>855</sup>

Sources reported the existence of quasi-security forces which have become the *de facto* security providers in a number of states.<sup>856</sup> These groups are generally composed of members from the same geographic area or ethnic community, and in some instances benefit from state facilitation, while operating with minimal accountability and near impunity.<sup>857</sup> Groups include the Yan Sakai, in Zamfara; the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), in the North-East; and Lakurawa, in North-West.<sup>858</sup> For more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#).

While the government has attempted to reduce corruption in public institutions, the problem remains ‘pervasive’, particularly in the security sector.<sup>859</sup> There are allegations of extortion and bribe-taking within the police force.<sup>860</sup> The police has also been accused of using excessive force against participants in anti-government demonstrations<sup>861</sup> (for more information see [2.7. Protesters](#)). The military has been accused of extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses, including during counterinsurgency efforts in the north and operations against separatist movements in the South-East<sup>862</sup> (for more information see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025; 2.13](#). Perceived Boko Haram members or supporters and [2.9. Members and perceived supporters of political parties and separatist movements](#)).

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<sup>852</sup> Oyakhirome, Iruebafa Lily, Police accountability: The role of the police complaint response unit, Nigeria, 8 July 2025, [url](#); UNODC, Experienced police misconduct and no justice served? Not anymore with the Nigeria Police Complaint Response Unit (CRU)!, 2024, [url](#)

<sup>853</sup> Nigeria, NPF, Force Criminal Investigation Department, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>854</sup> Business Day, Still on state police, 17 December 2024, [url](#); Vanguard, 400,000 policemen too small to police 200 million Nigerians – Oyo Chief, 7 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>855</sup> Business Day, Still on state police, 17 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>856</sup> Cable (The), Vigilantes, guns and governance: Nigeria’s dangerous security gamble, 8 July 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>857</sup> Cable (The), Vigilantes, guns and governance: Nigeria’s dangerous security gamble, 8 July 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>858</sup> Cable (The), Vigilantes, guns and governance: Nigeria’s dangerous security gamble, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>859</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>860</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>861</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: Police used excessive force to violently quash #Endbadgovernance protests, 28 November 2024, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>862</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: Thousands killed, hundreds forcibly disappeared in two years in South-East region, 13 August 2025, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)



Nigerian newspaper Premium Times reported that a 2024 survey<sup>863</sup> among workers in the criminal justice system, on compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, found the following:

- compliance with the Act regarding arrest procedures: ‘compliance’ (54.5 %), ‘non-compliance’ (18.9 %), ‘indifference’ (26.7 %);
- treatment of defendants and accused individuals: ‘respectful’ (50.2 %), ‘disrespectful’ (40.1 %);
- compliance on provisions for obtaining confessions: ‘mostly compliant’ (43.4 %), ‘rare or total non-compliance’ (37.8 %);
- about 67 % of respondents indicated that Nigeria’s police lack ‘modern investigative methods’; and
- about 56 % identified corruption among investigators and prosecutors as ‘one of the most critical problems with the criminal justice system’s performance’.<sup>864</sup>

Sources indicated that the Nigerian Police have inadequate infrastructure, personnel, and resources,<sup>865</sup> and that law enforcement agencies, in general, ‘still rely on outdated tools, undermining their ability to gather and preserve evidence effectively’.<sup>866</sup>

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<sup>863</sup> The survey was carried out by the CLEEN Foundation and consisted of the interview of 1 658 workers in the criminal justice system, including the police, judiciary, and correctional services, in Edo, Delta, Bauchi, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Kwara, and Cross River states. Premium Times, Study highlights inadequate compliance with Nigeria’s criminal justice act, 13 December 2024, [url](#). CLEEN Foundation is an NGO that promotes public safety, security and accessible justice through research, legislative advocacy, and publications, in partnership with government, civil society and the private sector. CLEEN Foundation, Overview, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>864</sup> Premium Times, Study highlights inadequate compliance with Nigeria’s criminal justice act, 13 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>865</sup> Premium Times, Study highlights inadequate compliance with Nigeria’s criminal justice act, 13 December 2024, [url](#); Business Day, Still on state police, 17 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>866</sup> Premium Times, Study highlights inadequate compliance with Nigeria’s criminal justice act, 13 December 2024, [url](#). See also: iTelemedia, 2025 Outlook: Police Reform and What It Means for Nigerians, 27 May 2025, [url](#)



## 3. Key socio-economic indicators

### 3.1. Economic situation

Nigeria is facing the worst economic crisis in a generation, with high poverty and hardship levels due to - among other reasons - the slow growth of the economy, high inflation,<sup>867</sup> and the recent implementation of economic policies by the government.<sup>868</sup> For more information see [3.3. Poverty](#).

Nigeria is one of the largest market economies in Africa<sup>869</sup> and a major oil exporter.<sup>870</sup> The gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2024 was 3.4 %.<sup>871</sup> In addition to crude oil, the country's main industries include coal, tin,<sup>872</sup> columbite, rubber, wood, textiles, food products, footwear, chemicals, fertilisers, and steel.<sup>873</sup> Its high dependency on crude oil, however, makes Nigeria vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices and production.<sup>874</sup> Nigeria is also becoming a leading exporter in liquified gas.<sup>875</sup>

The financial sector and telecommunications are 'very dynamic', and the banking industry is one of the largest and most sophisticated in Africa.<sup>876</sup> Services such as finance, construction, entertainment, hospitality, and government are concentrated in urban areas.<sup>877</sup> The construction sector is growing rapidly due to rising demand for new infrastructure, including housing, commercial buildings, roads, airports, and railways.<sup>878</sup> The agricultural sector is vital for Nigeria's economy.<sup>879</sup> Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava and the third-largest of tomatoes and groundnuts.<sup>880</sup> The country relies heavily on imports to meet the needs of its rapidly growing population.<sup>881</sup>

Nigeria's economy declined between 2015 and 2022 due to policy missteps, distortion of the monetary and exchange policies, lack of confidence in the economy, lower oil production, the

<sup>867</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); AP, Nigeria's independence anniversary is marked by protests and frustration over economic hardship, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>868</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); AP, Nigeria more than doubles the minimum wage for government workers after strikes and negotiations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>869</sup> Nigeria, High Commission to the United Kingdom, Economy, n.d., [url](#); US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>870</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#); US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>871</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix

<sup>872</sup> OPEC, Nigeria: Facts and figures, , n.d., [url](#); US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>873</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>874</sup> Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#); Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>875</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>876</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>877</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>878</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>879</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria's informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>880</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>881</sup> Week (The), Nigeria's economic woes: what went wrong for African nation, 29 February 2024, [url](#); SBM Intelligence, The SBM Jollof Index: Staple under stress, 23 April 2025, [url](#)



COVID-19 pandemic, high global food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and floods.<sup>882</sup> The administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who took office in May 2023, enacted several economic measures to bring price stability, including the elimination of a gasoline subsidy and the parallel exchange rate, and a tightening of monetary policy.<sup>883</sup> Sources indicated that the removal of the gasoline subsidy led to a significant increase in fuel prices, which in turn caused various other costs to rise as companies transferred the increased transportation and energy costs to the consumer.<sup>884</sup> Additionally, the elimination of the parallel exchange rate led to the depreciation of the Naira between 70 % and 100% against the US dollar and a sharp increase in the cost of imported goods.<sup>885</sup> In 2024, public debt increased by 34 % from 2023 due to the depreciation of the Naira and new borrowings, making the country vulnerable to fiscal constraints.<sup>886</sup>

The inflation rate has been increasing over the years, reaching 33.2 % in 2024.<sup>887</sup> In 2024, the rise in inflation was driven by food (up by 43 %, due to rising transport costs, insecurity in food-producing regions, and dependency on imports), transportation (up by 35.3 %, due to high oil prices), and utilities (up by 31.6 %, due to 'seasonal factors' and increased energy and electricity costs).<sup>888</sup> A survey by the Central Bank of Nigeria indicated that the major drivers of inflation for households in May 2025 were energy (e.g., fuel and electricity) (85.7 %), transportation (85 %), the exchange rate (82 %), and insecurity (80 %).<sup>889</sup> In an effort to control rising inflation, the Central Bank of Nigeria increased the interest rate from 15.5 % in October 2023 to 27.25 % in September 2024,<sup>890</sup> and the government temporarily suspended tariffs on imported goods.<sup>891</sup>

The gross domestic product (GDP) for 2024 was 3.4 %, the highest since 2014.<sup>892</sup> Economic growth was due in part to a continued recovery of the oil and gas sector and information technology,<sup>893</sup> as well as the growth in the financial and insurance sectors.<sup>894</sup> The agricultural sector, on the other hand, remained weak (1.2 % growth) due to high input costs and insecurity.<sup>895</sup> Additionally, there has been a lack of political commitment to implement plans for

<sup>882</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>883</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); AP, Nigeria more than doubles the minimum wage for government workers after strikes and negotiations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>884</sup> Week (The), Nigeria's economic woes: what went wrong for African nation, 29 February 2024, [url](#); Punch, Nigeria now reaching stability, after fuel subsidy removal – Minister, 13 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>885</sup> Week (The), Nigeria's economic woes: what went wrong for African nation, 29 February 2024, [url](#); Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#); Chatham House, Nigeria's economy needs the naira to stay competitive, 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>886</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>887</sup> IMF, Nigeria: Country Data, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>888</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>889</sup> Proshare, CBN Releases Inflation Expectations Survey for May 2025, 5 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>890</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#); PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>891</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>892</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix

<sup>893</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix; PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>894</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>895</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix



economic diversification and agricultural expansion.<sup>896</sup> For the third quarter of 2024, the highest-contributing industries to the real GDP included crop production (26.51 %), trade (14.78 %), telecommunication and information services (13.94 %), oil and natural gas (5.57 %), and real estate (5.43 %).<sup>897</sup> The annual GDP per capita has decreased since 2014, from 3 700 US dollars in 2014 to 824 US dollars in 2024.<sup>898</sup>

Obstacles to economic growth include insecurity, unreliable energy supply, deficient transportation infrastructure, high inflation, an inefficient judicial system, widespread corruption,<sup>899</sup> and lack of available foreign exchange, which makes it difficult for manufacturers to import required inputs for production.<sup>900</sup> Foreign direct investment is weak,<sup>901</sup> with less than 1 % of the GDP in 2024, and long term foreign investment continues to be affected by structural constraints of Nigerian economy.<sup>902</sup>

Lagos state is a main economic hub in Africa, largely driving economic activity in West Africa.<sup>903</sup> In 2024, Lagos had a GDP growth of 5.26 % and contributed with 22.36 % to Nigeria's national GDP. Lagos' size of the economy in 2025 is expected to be around 51 trillion Naira [28.1 billion Euros]. Lagos' key economic sectors are trade and information and communication technology.<sup>904</sup> In 2024, the industrial and service sectors grew by 2.86 % and 5.19 %, respectively. The agricultural sector, however, experimented low growth (0.8 %) due to insecurity, floodings, and logistic issues.<sup>905</sup> In an effort to address the impact of the 2024 economic reforms, the government of Lagos introduced several programs to ease the cost of living, including a 25 % discount on food staples and a 25 % fare reduction for public transportation.<sup>906</sup>

### 3.1.1. Infrastructure

Nigeria is a regional leader in critical infrastructure.<sup>907</sup> Investment for the development and modernisation of roads, railways, ports, airports, electrification infrastructure, pipelines, and dams has been increasing.<sup>908</sup> The country, however, presents major infrastructure gaps,<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>896</sup> Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#); Punch, Poor policies, infrastructure stall economic diversification – Economists, 12 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>897</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigerian Gross Domestic Product Report Q3 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>898</sup> IMF, Nigeria: Country Data, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>899</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#); Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>900</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>901</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 7; AP, Nigeria's independence anniversary is marked by protests and frustration over economic hardship, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>902</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>903</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>904</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), pp. ix-x

<sup>905</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), pp. 14-15

<sup>906</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>907</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>908</sup> Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>909</sup> Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#); World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix



most notably in electricity, transportation,<sup>910</sup> and manufacturing.<sup>911</sup> The lack of oil refineries in the country leads to regular fuel shortages.<sup>912</sup> Additionally, the Nigerian oil industry is ‘inefficient and costly’, and the domestic oil price per barrel is the second highest among oil-producing countries, after Iran.<sup>913</sup> Government-owned refineries reportedly operate at 5 to 25 % annual capacity.<sup>914</sup>

In 2023, the electricity grid covered 61 % of the population,<sup>915</sup> and 80 % of those connected could access electricity for a maximum of six hours per day.<sup>916</sup> The electrification of urban and rural areas is 89 % and 27 %, respectively.<sup>917</sup> A survey by Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on household welfare, income activities, and socio-economic outcomes,<sup>918</sup> indicated that access to electricity is higher in urban areas (82.2 % of households) than in rural areas (40.4 %).<sup>919</sup> The same source indicated that Nigerian households experience in average 6.7 blackouts per week.<sup>920</sup>

The World Bank indicated in December 2024 that 80 % of Nigeria’s road network was in ‘poor condition’ due to insufficient funding and weather events, such as high temperatures and rainfalls that damage the roads.<sup>921</sup> According to the Ministry of State for Works, insecurity is the major obstacle hindering road construction.<sup>922</sup> Large parts of Nigeria remain poorly connected to major economic centres, and these centres are not well integrated to each other.<sup>923</sup> Additionally, fees at the inter-state level and roadblocks hinder the ability to move cargo within the country.<sup>924</sup>

Nigeria’s railway network has about 4 332 track kilometres, most of it in disrepair due to vandalism and conversion of some stretches of the network into farms and residential buildings.<sup>925</sup> Daily Trust reported that the Nigerian railway network runs diagonally from the South West (Lagos) to North East (Nguru), and from the South South (Port Harcourt) through Kafanchan to the North East (Maiduguri).<sup>926</sup> Urban rapid transit railway projects were

<sup>910</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. ix

<sup>911</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>912</sup> Germany, BMZ, Economic situation: High dependency on oil, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>913</sup> ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>914</sup> ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>915</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 31; US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>916</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>917</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>918</sup> The survey was conducted between July 2023 and March 2024 and had a sample of 4 715 households nationally. Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024): Tracking Nigerian Households to Understand Their Resilience Over Time, 2024, [url](#), p. xi

<sup>919</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>920</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>921</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria to Enhance Road Infrastructure to Benefit Four Million in Rural Communities, 13 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>922</sup> Vanguard, Nigeria’s Infrastructure Push: FG targets legacy projects, 260 already completed – Minister, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>923</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>924</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>925</sup> Daily Trust, Inside Nigeria’s Dormant Railway Networks, 14 January 2024, [url](#). See also: US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>926</sup> Daily Trust, Inside Nigeria’s Dormant Railway Networks, 14 January 2024, [url](#)



inaugurated in Lagos and Abuja in 2023 and 2024, respectively.<sup>927</sup> The 157-kilometre Lagos-Ibadan railway was completed in 2021, and the 186-kilometre Abuja-Kaduna railway, in 2016.<sup>928</sup>

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) website indicated that there are five international and 11 domestic airports<sup>929</sup> in the country.<sup>930</sup> For additional information see [3.9. Mobility and freedom of movement](#).

Nigeria has 28 seaports, with two of them considered ‘large’, and 23 of the ports have oil terminals.<sup>931</sup> In 2023, Nigeria ranked 25<sup>th</sup> among Sub-Saharan African countries for artificial intelligence (AI) preparedness.<sup>932</sup> As Nigeria's economic hub, Lagos faces significant energy challenges, including an electricity deficit, high energy costs, reliance on fossil fuels, and infrastructure vulnerabilities.<sup>933</sup>

## 3.2. Employment

Labour force participation rates vary among sources. Out of an estimated population of 237 million<sup>934</sup> (of which approximately 105 million are children and adolescents aged 0-17<sup>935</sup>), labour force participation rate was estimated by ILO at 80.7 % for females and 84.4 % for males in 2024,<sup>936</sup> with over 3.5 million Nigerians entering the job market every year.<sup>937</sup> In the lower-middle income bracket, the rates were 40.9 % for females and 76.5 % for males.<sup>938</sup> Nigeria's NBS indicated that the 2024 labour participation rate was ‘nearly the same’ for both females (79.9 %) and males (79.1 %).<sup>939</sup> The same source indicated that 85.6 % of workers are self-employed and 14.4 % are employees, with females representing 88.3 % of those self-employed and males, 82.2 %.<sup>940</sup> Employment is predominantly informal,<sup>941</sup> with estimates of

<sup>927</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria's economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>928</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria's economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>929</sup> The ‘Domestic airports’ webpage indicates that there are 16 ‘domestic airports’; however, 4 out of the 16 airports are domestic terminals in the international airports of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt. Nigeria, FAAN, Domestic Airports, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>930</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Our Airports, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>931</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>932</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 68

<sup>933</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), p. 75

<sup>934</sup> Population figures are based on estimates and projections from World Population Prospects 2024 and Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2024 (UNFPA, Population Division). See UNFPA, State of the World Population Report 2025 ‘The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world’, 16 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 139, 142

<sup>935</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), pp. 4-10

<sup>936</sup> In World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>937</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>938</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>939</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>940</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>941</sup> The Jobberman report defined ‘informality’ as ‘all economic activities (excluding illicit activities) by workers and economic units that are in law or practice not covered or insufficiently covered by formal institutional arrangements. Conventional views use the term ‘informal sector’ to describe a group of industries and occupations characterised



about 93 % of people being informally employed in the country as of 2024.<sup>942</sup> For more information see [3.2.1 Informal employment](#). According to WEF, the 2025 part-time employment rate among those who are employed is 2.03 %.<sup>943</sup>

The rapid population growth is creating an ‘immense pressure for job creation’.<sup>944</sup> Most of the labour force is ‘lower middle income’ and primarily agrarian.<sup>945</sup> Employment is divided by sector as follows: services (47.8 %), agriculture (34.3 %), and industry (17.9 %).<sup>946</sup> Nigeria’s NBS household survey indicated that 71.6 % of Nigerian households are engaged in agriculture, being more predominant in male-headed households (75.7 %) than female-headed (57.1 %).<sup>947</sup> The same source indicated that most cultivated crops use household labour (96.8 %), signalling a ‘strong household production structure’.<sup>948</sup> Nigeria’s NBS indicated that 3.7 % of the working-age population was in subsistence agriculture.<sup>949</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) indicated that the concentration of employment in agriculture and commerce makes the economy less productive and hinders its ability to diversify.<sup>950</sup> Additionally, according to Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ), the government’s focus on the extractive sector creates relatively fewer jobs, and sectors such as construction, digital industry, and agriculture, which could generate more employment, receive less support.<sup>951</sup>

About 10 % of the labour force is enrolled in the Contributory Pension Scheme.<sup>952</sup> In an effort to increase pension enrolment in the population, the government introduced a micro pension plan in 2019; enrolment rates, however, are low, with about 84 000 people enrolled as of November 2022.<sup>953</sup> A 2024 report by Jobberman Nigeria, a Nigerian employment agency, based on a survey of 2 684 employers and 5 622 employees in several regions including Lagos and Abuja, indicated that labour laws often do not protect workers because their workplaces are unregistered, and that many workers are practically unprotected by labour regulations because the laws are not adapted to current working conditions.<sup>954</sup>

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by the absence of, or noncompliance to, regulatory frameworks that make jobs, enterprises and workers visible to the state’. Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>942</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2. See also: ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>943</sup> WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>944</sup> ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>945</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>946</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>947</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 61

<sup>948</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 61

<sup>949</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>950</sup> ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>951</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria, Improving training and employment opportunities, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>952</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 37

<sup>953</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 37

<sup>954</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 61



In July 2024, the minimum wage was increased from 30 000 [16.78 Euros] to 70 000 Naira [39.15 Euros] per month after labour unions threatened with further strikes due to the rising cost of living.<sup>955</sup> The increase in the minimum wage, however, benefitted 4.1 % of Nigerians (3.2 % in the private sector and 0.9 % in the public sector).<sup>956</sup> Additionally, the purchasing power in Nigeria has depleted over the years due to inflation, which constantly overcomes employment income.<sup>957</sup>

Sources indicated that Nigeria has a shortage of skilled and educated labour,<sup>958</sup> and that vocational schools teach ‘only few’ of the skills relevant for the labour market.<sup>959</sup> In 2019, the government launched the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) to develop Nigeria’s digital economy and diversify away from its dependence on oil and gas,<sup>960</sup> by providing training to over one million Nigerians.<sup>961</sup> The NDEPS and other plans implemented by foreign companies such as Microsoft and Google, however, are ‘insufficient’ given the rising demand for training.<sup>962</sup>

Nigeria’s NBS household survey indicated that approximately seven out of ten nonfarm enterprises are engaged in the retail area, including food, beverages, and tobacco (37.1 %), sales of other products (31.8 %), and restaurants (12.6 %), and that only 13.1 % of nonfarm enterprises were registered.<sup>963</sup> The same source indicated that the most common obstacles to starting a nonfarm enterprise were problems with electricity supply (19.7 %), inability to obtain funding (19.3 %), and transportation problems (17 %).<sup>964</sup>

### 3.2.1. Informal employment

Sources indicated that employment is predominantly informal<sup>965</sup> and with low productivity, and that wage-paying jobs were rare and concentrated for the most educated.<sup>966</sup> According to Nigeria’s NBS, in June 2024, about 93 % of employment in the country was informal,<sup>967</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> Reuters, Nigerian lawmakers pass minimum wage bill, ending labour dispute, 23 July 2024, [url](#); AP, Nigeria more than doubles the minimum wage for government workers after strikes and negotiations, 19 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>956</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>957</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>958</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria, Improving training and employment opportunities, 2 February 2024, [url](#); Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>959</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria, Improving training and employment opportunities, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>960</sup> Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030), 2020, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>961</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>962</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>963</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), pp. 56-57

<sup>964</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 59

<sup>965</sup> The Jobberman report defined ‘informality’ as ‘all economic activities (excluding illicit activities) by workers and economic units that are in law or practice not covered or insufficiently covered by formal institutional arrangements. Conventional views use the term ‘informal sector’ to describe a group of industries and occupations characterised by the absence of, or noncompliance to, regulatory frameworks that make jobs, enterprises and workers visible to the state’. Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>966</sup> ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1; Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>967</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2. See also: ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1



meaning that ‘a vast majority of the country’s workforce is engaged in jobs or businesses that are not formally registered, regulated, or taxed by the government’.<sup>968</sup> Women are more likely than men to be in informal employment (96 % compared to 90 %).<sup>969</sup> Informality rates are higher in rural areas (97.5 %) than in urban areas (90%).<sup>970</sup> With respect to disability in informal employment, 96.4 % of individuals with disabilities who were employed worked in the informal sector, in contrast to 93 % of non-disabled individuals.<sup>971</sup> Informal jobs include activities such as street vending, small-scale farming, artisanship, and other small businesses that operate without formal contracts, protections, or access to social security benefits. Labour market experts interviewed by Nigerian news source Business Day indicated that underemployment and informality obscure the actual extent of joblessness in the country, noting that these factors impact government efforts to broaden the tax base for revenue shortfalls and present challenges related to job security, access to credit, and economic vulnerability.<sup>972</sup>

The Jobberman report indicated that the informal market is largely regulated by ‘gatekeepers’ such as trade associations and cooperatives, which provide financial, administrative, and political support; oversee market operations; and ‘maintain order, safety, and security’. They also act as intermediaries between trade groups and the government at state and local levels. According to the same source, many young people refrain from engaging with ‘gatekeepers’ due to their resistance to innovation and the perception that they serve as vehicles for extortion through ‘membership levies and fees’. The Jobberman report indicated that although these associations are considered ‘exploitative, many local traders and service providers are indebted to them due to their credit facilities, training, apprenticeships, and protection support’.<sup>973</sup> Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

The Jobberman report indicated that survivalist<sup>974</sup> workers and enterprises are the most vulnerable in the informal labour force, suffering from poverty, limited education, and few opportunities; often facing precarious employment with long hours, poor pay, and hazardous conditions. They commonly work in public spaces and include casual labourers, unskilled service providers, recyclers, street vendors, industrial outworkers, hawkers, and waste pickers.<sup>975</sup>

<sup>968</sup> Business Day, Jobless rate rises on multinationals’ exit, factory closures, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>969</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 10. See also: ILO, ILO Brief: Navigating Nigeria’s economic and labour market challenges: Pathways to inclusive growth and structural transformation, November 2024, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>970</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 11. See also: Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>971</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>972</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>973</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>974</sup> The Jobberman report defines ‘survivalist workers and enterprises’ as ‘the most vulnerable segment of the informal labour force based on social indicators like poverty, access to education and skills, and available opportunities. Survivalist workers are prone to the most precarious and discriminatory forms of employment. They engage in long hours of laborious work with discriminatory payment systems in hazardous working conditions, usually public spaces’. Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), pp. 22, 25

<sup>975</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 25



### 3.2.2. Unemployment

In April 2023, the government changed the unemployment rate calculation methodology to follow ILO guidelines. The new methodology, which started to be applied in the fourth quarter of 2022, counts people working 20 hours per week or less as ‘employed’, thus dropping the unemployment rate from 33.3 % in 2020 to 4.1 % in 2023.<sup>976</sup> Under the new methodology, the unemployment rate decreased from 5.3 % in the fourth quarter of 2022, to 4.2 % in the second quarter of 2023, but increased to 4.3 % in the second quarter of 2024.<sup>977</sup> In urban areas, the unemployment rate was reported higher than in rural areas (5.2 % compared to 2.8 %).<sup>978</sup> The unemployment rate for 2025 is estimated at 3.16 %.<sup>979</sup>

Nigeria’s revamp of economic indicators sparked debate, as observers pointed out that the sharp drop in unemployment is not due to job creation but rather a change in the National Bureau of Statistics’ methodology.<sup>980</sup>

Analysts consulted by Nigerian newspaper Business Day indicated that the exiting of multinationals from Nigeria and the closure of several factories due to rising production costs and shifts in consumer spending due to the high cost of living, led to job cuts across various industries. Industries included manufacturing companies and major companies such as GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Nigeria Ltd, Sanofi-Aventis Nigeria Ltd, and Equinox Nigeria.<sup>981</sup> The same source reported that high energy costs and foreign exchange losses led to the implementation of ‘cost cutting measures’, including downsizings and layoffs, to adapt to the new environment. According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), about 767 manufacturing companies shut down in 2023, while 335 experienced ‘distress’.<sup>982</sup>

### 3.2.3. Employment for specific groups

#### Youth

Sources indicated that youth unemployment in Nigeria is a national ‘crisis’.<sup>983</sup> They also indicated that high youth unemployment is due to a significant skills gaps, and that industries struggle to find trained workers for key roles, especially in technical and vocational fields.<sup>984</sup> Many young Nigerians lack the specific skills that employers need, resulting in unfilled

<sup>976</sup> Cable (The), EXPLAINER: The new NBS methodology behind Nigeria’s 4.1% unemployment figure, 26 August 2023, [url](#); African Business, Nigeria’s revamp of economic indicators sparks debate, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>977</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#); World Bank (The), Human Capital, Country Brief: Nigeria, October 2024, [url](#); Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>978</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>979</sup> WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>980</sup> Cable (The), EXPLAINER: The new NBS methodology behind Nigeria’s 4.1% unemployment figure, 26 August 2023, [url](#); African Business, Nigeria’s revamp of economic indicators sparks debate, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>981</sup> Business Day, Jobless rate rises on multinationals’ exit, factory closures, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>982</sup> Business Day, Jobless rate rises on multinationals’ exit, factory closures, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>983</sup> African Liberty, Nigeria in Crisis Due to Youth Unemployment, 11 December 2024, [url](#); Vanguard, Youth unemployment: Reps move to establish vocational centres in 774 LGAs, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>984</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#); African Liberty, Nigeria in Crisis Due to Youth Unemployment, 11 December 2024, [url](#)



positions.<sup>985</sup> The Human Capital Index for Nigeria indicated that 27 % of children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in the labour market, and that 14 % of young people with ages between 15 and 24, are neither employed, nor in school, nor in training.<sup>986</sup> According to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Factbook, the 2024 unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 to 24 was 5.1 %, with males at 3.7 % and females at 6.5 %.<sup>987</sup> Nigeria's NBS survey indicated that the youth unemployment rate for the second quarter of 2024 was 6.5 %, a decrease from 8.4 % in the previous quarter.<sup>988</sup> For more information see [3.6 Education](#).

In June 2024, the unemployment rate for people with secondary education was 7.6 %.<sup>989</sup> However, the Nigeria Education News, a news website on education issues in Nigeria, indicated, that the unemployment rate for Nigerian youth was about 53 % in 2023.<sup>990</sup> According to Germany's BMZ, the growing young generation 'has very little prospect of getting access to formal jobs, housing or basic social protection' due to low economic growth, high levels of population growth, and high levels of informal employment.<sup>991</sup>

Sources reported that Nigerian companies are unable to find qualified workers due to a disconnection between local universities' curriculum and the reality on the ground, which leave young Nigerians with significant skills gaps after graduation and render them unable to compete in the job market.<sup>992</sup> Daily Trust reported that, according to local research, about 55 % of young people in Nigeria remain unemployed or underemployed, not due to a lack of education, but 'because of a shortage of practical, digital, and cognitive skills demanded by today's labour market'.<sup>993</sup> Sources reported that firms in sectors such as technology, agriculture, manufacturing, and services are increasingly hiring workforce from other African countries due to local shortages and technical expertise.<sup>994</sup>

## Women

The Jobberman report noted that women encounter educational disparities, patriarchal work environments, and cultural barriers impacting their participation in the labour market.<sup>995</sup> The World Bank indicated that, according to ILO statistics, the 2023 rate of 'vulnerable employment'<sup>996</sup> for females in Nigeria was 78.9 % compared to 54.3 % for males, down from the 2018 rates of 78.9 % and 54.9 %, respectively.<sup>997</sup> A 2025 report on women in the

<sup>985</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#); African Liberty, Nigeria in Crisis Due to Youth Unemployment, 11 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>986</sup> World Bank (The), Human Capital, Country Brief: Nigeria, October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>987</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>988</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>989</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024, November 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>990</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>991</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>992</sup> Business Day, Nigeria's youth face skills gap as employers struggle to fill roles, 27 June 2025, [url](#); Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>993</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>994</sup> Business Day, Nigeria's youth face skills gap as employers struggle to fill roles, 27 June 2025, [url](#); Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>995</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria's informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 62

<sup>996</sup> The World Bank defined 'vulnerable employment' as the 'least likely to have formal work arrangements, social protection, and safety nets to guard against economic shocks; thus [being] more likely to fall into poverty'. In World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>997</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)



workplace in India, Nigeria, and Kenya, by McKinsey & Company, a New York City-based consulting firm that offers financial and operational services to corporations, governments and other organisations, showed that despite constituting half of the national workforce, women occupy just one in three entry-level positions within the formal private sector.<sup>998</sup> According to the same source, private sector beliefs about gender roles in the workplace are commonplace, with roles in engineering and technical services, for example, being male-dominated.<sup>999</sup> In healthcare, in contrast, women and men have the same representation at the entry level, but the rate of women drops to 10 % in management positions.<sup>1000</sup>

### Labour migration and IDPs

The Lagos Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget indicated that between 2022 and 2024, the state experienced an unprecedented increase in labour migration and internally displaced persons (IDPs), resulting in a net daily population growth of approximately 3 000 individuals, a surge that has led to a significant impact on infrastructure, housing, and public services.<sup>1001</sup> The same source explained that Lagos state faces challenges in accommodating the rapid population growth, which is leading to ‘widespread homelessness’ and the expansion of slums, and that migrants and IDPs, especially those with limited resources, frequently settle in peripheral areas where informal housing and inadequate amenities are common.<sup>1002</sup> The Borgen Project, a US-based nonprofit organisation dedicated to addressing global poverty, similarly indicated that while most analysts concentrate on Lagos, other cities such as Ibadan, Kano, and Abuja are also experiencing rapid population growth, and although rapid urbanisation can stimulate local economic growth, it is also straining social services and infrastructure, particularly impacting the poor.<sup>1003</sup>

### Other groups

Nigeria’s NBS survey indicated that 80 % of persons without disabilities participate in the labour market, compared to 36.7 % of people with disabilities.<sup>1004</sup> The 2025 unemployment rate for those 15 to 64 years of age was 4.15 % among women and 2.14 % among men.<sup>1005</sup>

### 3.2.4. Lagos and Abuja

The Lagos State Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget indicated that businesses face challenges in finding suitable candidates with the appropriate skills and education.<sup>1006</sup> The Jobberman report indicated that traditional informality is prevalent outside urban centres like Lagos due to the dominance of traditional markets, and that in Lagos in particular, informality persists due to poor market organisation and digital awareness, high cost of living,

<sup>998</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2025: India, Nigeria, and Kenya*, 2025, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>999</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2025: India, Nigeria, and Kenya*, 2025, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>1000</sup> McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2025: India, Nigeria, and Kenya*, 2025, [url](#), p. 38

<sup>1001</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, *Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025*, 2025, [url](#), p. 79

<sup>1002</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, *Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025*, 2025, [url](#), p. 79

<sup>1003</sup> Borgen Project (The), *Urban poverty in Nigeria: Addressing the plight of the poor*, 28 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1004</sup> Nigeria, NBS, *Nigeria Labour Force Survey (NLFS) Report, Q2 2024*, November 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1005</sup> WEF, *Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria*, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1006</sup> Business Day, *Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless*, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

market fragmentation, and local disruptions.<sup>1007</sup> The Lagos Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget indicated that, for 2025, monthly salaries in Lagos state vary according to the occupation:

- management positions, with the highest monthly salary, earn an average of 215 000 Naira [120.5 Euros];
- accounting, information technology, legal, health, engineering, finance, and technician positions, earn average salaries ranging between 100 000 [56 Euros] and 200 000 Naira [112 Euros];
- occupations in areas such as transportation, administration, sales, and education, earn an average salary below 100 000 Naira [56 Euros].<sup>1008</sup>

The unemployment rate by state for the reference period of this report could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints. Nigeria's NBS provided the following statistics for 2023:

	National	Federal Capital Territory	Lagos
<b>Unemployment</b>	5.4 %	14.1 %	5.5 %
<b>Labour force participation rate<sup>1009</sup></b>	76.3 %	64.9 %	74.3 %
<b>Time-related underemployment rate<sup>1010</sup></b>	11.1 %	6 %	4.4 %
<b>Informal employment</b>	92.2 %	76.5 %	76.3 %

Source: Nigeria, Nigeria Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2023, 2024, [url](#), pp. ii, 13, 128, 189

No additional information on employment, specifically regarding Abuja and relevant for the reference period of this report, could be found among all source consulted.

<sup>1007</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria's informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>1008</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos Economic Development Update (LEDU) 2025, 2025, [url](#), p. 64

<sup>1009</sup> Labour force participation rate is 'the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work. It indicates the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services relative to the working-age population. It is defined as the ratio of the labour force to the working-age population expressed in percentage terms'. Nigeria, Nigeria Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>1010</sup> The time-related underemployment rate is defined as 'the share of employed people who are working less than 40 hours per week, but who would be willing and available to do more hours of work'. Nigeria, Nigeria Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 32

### 3.3. Poverty

Even though Nigeria is one of the top oil producers in Africa, the country remains one of the poorest in the world.<sup>1011</sup> By the end of 2024, about 50 % of Nigerians were living under the poverty line of 2.15 US dollars per day.<sup>1012</sup> Over 133 million Nigerians feel the impact of multidimensional poverty, the highest number recorded globally,<sup>1013</sup> with the number of people living below the poverty line expected to rise by about 13 million by the end of 2025.<sup>1014</sup> According to Germany's BMZ, if poverty is measured by additional factors such as health, education, employment and standard of living, more than 60 % of people in Nigeria are considered 'poor'.<sup>1015</sup>

Data from 2022 show that most deprivations included cooking fuel (50.6 % of people), sanitation (46.5 %), healthcare (38.7 %), food insecurity (38.6 %), housing materials (38.6 %), and water (29.3 %).<sup>1016</sup> According to Nigeria's NBS household survey, wood is the most common cooking fuel in Nigeria (used by 70.2 % of households), followed by liquefied petroleum gas (23.2 %).<sup>1017</sup> In 2022, Nigeria's NBS indicated that about half of the population who were multidimensionally poor cooked with dung, wood or charcoal, and that high deprivations were also present in sanitation, healthcare, food insecurity, and housing.<sup>1018</sup>

Nigeria's economic growth is hindered by low state capacity, poor service delivery, corruption, infrastructure gaps, trade protectionism, extreme weather events, widespread insecurity and violence,<sup>1019</sup> gender inequality, 'adverse social norms', and economic non-diversification.<sup>1020</sup> Inadequate urban planning policies, combined with other contributing factors, have resulted in rising levels of urban poverty in Nigeria.<sup>1021</sup> Insecurity is another factor that exacerbates poverty levels due to the impact on investor confidence, business operations, and agricultural productivity, particularly in Northern producing states, leading to higher food prices, increase in food imports, and higher unemployment and poverty levels.<sup>1022</sup>

In response to high poverty rates, the government implemented a temporary cash transfer program for 15 million households, considered the 'poorest and most economically at-risk'.<sup>1023</sup>

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<sup>1011</sup> AP, Nigeria more than doubles the minimum wage for government workers after strikes and negotiations, 19 July 2024, [url](#); Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1012</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 6; Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1013</sup> EEAS, 2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World, 22 May 2025, [url](#), p. 127

<sup>1014</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 43

<sup>1015</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1016</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>1017</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>1018</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. xiv

<sup>1019</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); BASIC Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1020</sup> BASIC Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1021</sup> Borgen Project (The), Urban poverty in Nigeria: Addressing the plight of the poor, 28 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1022</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 59

<sup>1023</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); Nigeria, High Commission to the United Kingdom, Economy, n.d., [url](#)



The implementation process, however, has encountered delays, resulting in only 5.6 million households benefitting due to issues with the digital identification verification mechanism.<sup>1024</sup>

Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that only 4 % of households received assistance from the government, mostly comprising cash (54 % of households) and food (49.3 %).<sup>1025</sup> Assistance is more prevalent in the South-South (6.7 % of households) and North-West (5.6 %), and less common in North-Central (2.6 %) and South East (1.5 %).<sup>1026</sup> A report on poverty dynamics in Nigeria by Better Assistance in Crises Research (BASIC Research), a UK Foreign Office-funded program that produces research on poverty and development assistance, indicated that social assistance was frequently viewed in southern areas as 'politicised' given that it reportedly reaches more often politically-connected people.<sup>1027</sup> The same source also indicated that, according to locals, the distribution of government assistance is 'unreliable' and 'unfair' as benefits are reportedly paid to non-eligible individuals, including local leaders and intermediaries.<sup>1028</sup> Punch reported in June 2025 that, according to the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Nigeria is 'reaching stability' after the removal of the fuel subsidy and parallel foreign exchange rate.<sup>1029</sup>

Nigeria is also one of Africa's 'worst performers' in tackling inequality, being surpassed only by war-torn countries such as South Sudan and Somalia.<sup>1030</sup> The World Inequality Database for 2023 indicated that, for Nigeria, the total national income consisted of 42.1 % earned by the top 10 % of earners, 11.4 % by the top 1 %, while the bottom 50 % of the population earned 16.7 % of the total income.<sup>1031</sup> Regarding wealth, the same source indicated that the top 10 % owned 60.4 % of the wealth, the top 1 % owned 26.9 %, while the bottom 50 %, 3.9 %.<sup>1032</sup> Similar to the causes of poverty in Nigeria above, drivers of inequality in the country include inadequate access to social services, corruption, insecurity, gender disparities, and the high operational costs of governance in Nigeria.<sup>1033</sup>

In response to living conditions in Nigeria, anti-government protests took place in August 2024.<sup>1034</sup> Protests were mostly led by young people,<sup>1035</sup> and state response left over 20 protesters dead and hundreds arrested.<sup>1036</sup> For more information see [2.7. Protesters](#).

<sup>1024</sup> World Bank (The), Building Momentum for Inclusive Growth, May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1025</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>1026</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>1027</sup> BASIC Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>1028</sup> BASIC Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>1029</sup> Punch, Nigeria now reaching stability, after fuel subsidy removal — Minister, 13 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1030</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1031</sup> World Inequality Database, Nigeria: Income inequality, 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1032</sup> World Inequality Database, Nigeria: Income inequality, 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1033</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 53-69

<sup>1034</sup> Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Nigeria's Fight to #EndBadGovernance, 26 August 2024, [url](#); AP, Nigeria's independence anniversary is marked by protests and frustration over economic hardship, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1035</sup> Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Nigeria's Fight to #EndBadGovernance, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1036</sup> AP, Nigeria's independence anniversary is marked by protests and frustration over economic hardship, 1 October 2024, [url](#)



### 3.3.1. Children, women, IDPs

Nigeria's NBS indicated that, in 2022, 83.5 % of children under five years of age, or 22.9 million, were multidimensionally poor, with the average national rate being about 50 %, and over 95 % in Bayelsa, Sokoto, Gombe, and Kebbi.<sup>1037</sup> The same source indicated that, out of the 29 % of all school-aged children who were not attending school, 94 % were poor and with no major gender disparity identified (27.3 % for boys and 26.8 % for girls).<sup>1038</sup> According to Oxfam, net wealth in Nigeria in 2024 had a positive correlation with age, with the youngest age group (18-24 years old) having an average net wealth of one million Naira [555 Euros], followed by the 25-34 age group with two million Naira [1 110 Euros], the 45-54 age group with six million Naira [3 328 Euros], and the 65 and over age group with ten million Naira [5 547 Euros].<sup>1039</sup>

The World Inequality Database indicated that, in 2023, female income was 26.8 % out of the total labour income in Nigeria.<sup>1040</sup> The World Bank indicated that in 2021, 35 % of females and 55.5 % of males had a bank account, representing a large gap when compared to the average rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (49 % for females and 61 % for males).<sup>1041</sup> A study on poverty in Nigeria<sup>1042</sup> financed by BASE Research, a UK Foreign Office sponsored organisation that assist poor and vulnerable populations, indicated that gender-related constraints such as divorce, (dis-)inheritance rights, household responsibilities, and the 'gendered segregation of women' into low-wage jobs prevent the upward mobility of women. The same source further indicated that the death of a spouse can severely impoverish a household since women would have to cover all costs associated with the household in a context of gender discrimination and lower salaries for women. According to the study, women across Nigeria share similar challenges related to social norms, such as barriers to education, gender-based violence, and marriage customs, but these challenges are accentuated depending on the region.<sup>1043</sup> For example, social norms that preclude women from inheriting property are still prevalent in the south, particularly the South East, where women do not have the same rights as their counterparts in the North; and early and forced marriages remain common, especially in the north, and the majority of those without schooling are women, regardless of location.<sup>1044</sup> As a result, women face a double disadvantage as they are often more affected by crises because of social norms that disadvantage them disproportionately, and these norms amplify the impact of these crises and deprivations.<sup>1045</sup>

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<sup>1037</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. xvi

<sup>1038</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>1039</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>1040</sup> World Inequality Database, Nigeria: Income inequality, 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1041</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1042</sup> The study was based on quantitative and qualitative data collected between July and September 2023 across six states in the six regional zones. BASE Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1043</sup> BASE Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), pp. 28-29

<sup>1044</sup> BASE Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 28. See also: UNFPA, The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 91

<sup>1045</sup> BASE Research, Poverty Dynamics and Social Assistance Amidst Intersecting Crises in Nigeria, February 2025, [url](#), p. 28



### 3.3.2. Lagos, Abuja and other regional differences

The World Bank noted that regional inequality is significant, with the best-performing regions comparable to upper middle-income countries, while the worst-performing states sitting below the average of low-income countries.<sup>1046</sup>

The NBS household survey indicated that, in 2022, multidimensional poverty was higher in rural areas (72 %), compared to urban settings (42 %).<sup>1047</sup> The same source indicated that in Lagos, 29.4 % of people were multidimensionally poor, while in the Federal Capital Territory, the rate was 48.3 %.<sup>1048</sup>

Germany's BMZ indicated that living conditions in northern Nigeria are worse compared to other parts of the country due to less attention from the central government.<sup>1049</sup> According to Oxfam, 60 % of the poorest population in Nigeria is concentrated in the northern regions.<sup>1050</sup> The average household income in the north is around 50 000 Naira [27.73 Euros] per month, while in the south a salary can exceed 75 000 Naira [41.6 Euros] per month.<sup>1051</sup> Net wealth<sup>1052</sup> is also higher in the southern region, with an average of six million Naira [3 328 Euros]; followed by the western region, with an average of five million Naira [2 774 Euros]; and the northern region, with an average of 2.5 million Naira [1 387 Euros].<sup>1053</sup> Women in the north face greater barriers and challenges due to socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attending formal education and, as such, are relegated to household chores.<sup>1054</sup>

According to a report on poverty in Lagos published by The Conversation,<sup>1055</sup> despite being Nigeria's economic powerhouse, Lagos has some of the worst slums in the country, with Makoko and Iwaya experiencing high rates of deprivation in education and healthcare.<sup>1056</sup> In these slums, for example, toilet facilities and waste management were precarious, with waste often disposed of in waterways.<sup>1057</sup> The Borgen Project indicated that most residents of Makoko work in the informal economy, earning less than 1.25 US dollars per day.<sup>1058</sup> Additionally, the report indicated that the 'prevalence of both serious and minor illnesses, coupled with insufficient medical care, contributed to high mortality rates'.<sup>1059</sup>

Regarding Abuja, The Borgen Project reported that more than 50 % of people living in Abuja experience poverty, and that 'low-income earners, including cleaners and security guards, are

<sup>1046</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1047</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>1048</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. 101

<sup>1049</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1050</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 22. See also: Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), 2023, [url](#), p. xiv

<sup>1051</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>1052</sup> 'Net wealth represents the total value of an individual's or household's assets minus their liabilities (debts).' See Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 28

<sup>1053</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 28

<sup>1054</sup> Oxfam, Income and wealth inequality in Nigeria: Trends and drivers, 15 October 2024, [url](#), p. 66

<sup>1055</sup> The report is based on a survey of 400 inhabitants in five Lagos' slums: Makoko, Iwaya, Ilaje, Ijora Badia and Amukoko. Conversation (The), Poverty in Lagos isn't just about money – here's why, 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1056</sup> Conversation (The), Poverty in Lagos isn't just about money – here's why, 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1057</sup> Conversation (The), Poverty in Lagos isn't just about money – here's why, 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1058</sup> Borgen Project (The), Urbanization in Lagos: Impacting poverty in Nigeria, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1059</sup> Conversation (The), Poverty in Lagos isn't just about money – here's why, 21 October 2024, [url](#)



the most vulnerable'.<sup>1060</sup> Wealth inequality in Abuja is 'striking', with upscale areas like Asokoro and Maitama exhibiting luxury cars and smooth roads, while nearby communities like Mpape and Dakibiyu are struggling with poor infrastructure, scarce clean water and unreliable electricity.<sup>1061</sup> Sources also reported on the increasing number of beggars on Abuja's streets, mostly coming from Northern states.<sup>1062</sup> Nigerian newspaper Daily Trust reported on the increasing number of school-age girls who are exploited into child labour, street trading, and other menial jobs in Abuja. According to the same source, these girls include girls from Abuja whose families cannot pay for education; IDP girls, mostly from Northern states fleeing insecurity and terrorism; and girls brought to Abuja for child labour exploitation, mainly as domestic servants, in restaurants, or in shopping malls.<sup>1063</sup>

### 3.4. Food security

Around 70 % of the population is food insecure.<sup>1064</sup> The 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranked Nigeria 110<sup>th</sup> out of 127 countries on 'hunger severity', which is considered 'serious', with undernourishment reaching 18 % of the population in 2024.<sup>1065</sup> According to Nigeria's NBS household survey, about two out of three households reported being unable to eat healthy or nutritious food due to lack of money, with 72.2 % and 64 % of female- and male-headed households, respectively, experiencing food insecurity and being unable to eat healthy.<sup>1066</sup> A quantitative socio-economic survey commissioned by the Country of Origin Information Unit of the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum to Nigerian polling company NOIPolls Limited,<sup>1067</sup> indicated that 16 % of those surveyed managed to afford 'sufficient food for their family', a decrease from 21 % in 2023; whereas 49 % 'hardly managed', and 8 % could not manage.<sup>1068</sup> The UN World Food Programme (WFP) indicated that in 2025, 29.4 million and 1.2 million Nigerians were in Phase 3 and Phase 4, respectively, of acute food insecurity.<sup>1069, 1070</sup> Rising food prices due to rising inflation is also exacerbating the cost of living.<sup>1071</sup>

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<sup>1060</sup> Borgen Project (The), The divide between wealth and poverty in Abuja, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1061</sup> Borgen Project (The), The divide between wealth and poverty in Abuja, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1062</sup> Daily Trust, Weak and vulnerable: A disturbing oversight in FCT governance, 28 May 2025, [url](#); Guardian (The), Poverty amid plenty: Growing nation of destitute as homeless kids invade Abuja, S'West, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1063</sup> Daily Trust, Out-of-school girls in Abuja: Lost dream of education and the burden of survival, 25 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1064</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1065</sup> GHI, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1066</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>1067</sup> The survey took place between 22 July and 2 August 2024 and had a sample of 608 respondents between the ages of 16 and 35 in Lagos (196 residents), Auchi (206), and Benin (206). Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 15

<sup>1068</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 6, 11

<sup>1069</sup> WFP defines 'acute food insecurity' as the inability of a person 'to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate danger'. WFP, Global Report on Food Crises: acute hunger remains persistently high in 59 countries with 1-in-5 people assessed in need of critical urgent action, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1070</sup> WFP and FAO, Hunger Hotspots. FAO–WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: June to October 2025 outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1071</sup> HRW, Rising Food Prices Deepen Nigeria's Poverty Crisis, 15 May 2025, [url](#)



Constraints in the supply of food include insecurity, low productivity, high transportation costs, depreciation of the Naira, the Russian invasion of Ukraine,<sup>1072</sup> and floodings.<sup>1073</sup> FEWS NET indicated that flooding in Nigeria usually peaks between July and August each year, and if widespread and above-average flooding occurs, cropped areas, livestock, and infrastructure are negatively impacted, particularly farmland along major floodplains.<sup>1074</sup> Flooding events can also lead to detours, increased transportation costs, and higher staple food prices.<sup>1075</sup>

SBM Intelligence indicated that the national average cost of cooking jollof rice, a main staple and culturally significant dish in Nigeria, increased by 19.7 % between September 2024 and March 2025, and that protein remains the most costly item of the food basket, with the price of turkey, for example, increasing by over 500 % since 2016.<sup>1076</sup> Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that the average consumption rate of meat, fish, and other animal proteins in Nigerian households was 3.2 days per week, with regions in the South having higher consumption rates (South East, 3.5 days per week; South West, 3.9; South South, 4.9) than regions in the North (North Central, 3.4; North-East, 2.4; North-West, 1.6), and urban households having a higher rate (3.5 days per week) compared to rural ones (3.1 %).<sup>1077</sup>

Germany's BMZ indicated that exposure to poor health and nutrition frequently start at birth.<sup>1078</sup> In 2024, about 43.5 % of women of reproductive age consumed a diet that met the standards for minimum dietary diversity.<sup>1079</sup> In the first quarter of 2025, the nutrition situation deteriorated 'sharply', with an estimated 3 million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) (an increase from 2.6 million in 2024).<sup>1080</sup> In June 2024, UNICEF indicated that one out of three children under the age of five in Nigeria, or around 11 million children, experience 'severe child food poverty', making them 50 % more likely to experience wasting.<sup>1081</sup> According to the GHI, for children under the age of five, 31.5 % were stunted, 6.5 % wasted, and 10.7 % died before the fifth birthday.<sup>1082</sup>

Northern Nigeria is particularly affected by food insecurity.<sup>1083</sup> According to Food Security Cluster, an initiative established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP to coordinate food security emergencies, '[f]ood systems in the northeast region remain under severe strain due to insecurity, climate change, economic crisis, and poor infrastructure. Farmers face immense challenges, including land abandonment, loss of livelihoods, and restricted market access, all exacerbated by soaring inflation'.<sup>1084</sup> The survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited showed that about 52 % of

<sup>1072</sup> Conversation (The), Nigeria's economy in 2025 doesn't look bright – analyst explains why, 6 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1073</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13

<sup>1074</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 12-13

<sup>1075</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>1076</sup> SBM Intelligence, The SBM Jollof Index: Staple under stress, 23 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1077</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>1078</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1079</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>1080</sup> UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, January-April 2025, 15 May 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1081</sup> Wasting is defined as 'a life-threatening form of malnutrition'. See UNICEF, 1 in 3 children in Nigeria experiences severe child food poverty due to conflict, climate crises, and inequity, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1082</sup> GHI, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1083</sup> Food Security Cluster, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), pp. 38-39

<sup>1084</sup> Food Security Cluster, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)





those surveyed in Lagos indicated that they ‘hardly managed’ to afford food, while 11 % indicated that they could not.<sup>1085</sup>

In Lagos, between 5 and 10 % are food insecure, whereas in Abuja the percentage range is between 20 and 30 %.<sup>1086</sup> According to FEWS NET, in October 2024, Lagos and Abuja had an ‘acute food insecurity’ classification of 1, ‘minimal’,<sup>1087</sup> in contrast to states like Borno, Zamfara, and Katsina where a number of areas were classified as 3, in ‘crisis’.<sup>1088</sup> The website of the IPC indicated that, for the period between June and August 2025, both Lagos and Abuja were classified as ‘stressed’.<sup>1089</sup>

### 3.4.1. Refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs

In 2024, UNHCR reported that, after screening more than 8 000 refugees and 20 000 IDPs, it found 94 refugees and 113 IDPs with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), and 280 refugees and 408 IDPs with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM).<sup>1090</sup>

FEWS NET indicated that the conflict in the North-East, especially in Borno state, ‘has led to depleted food stocks, reduced purchasing power, and restricted food access for IDPs, returnees, and households in inaccessible areas’.<sup>1091</sup> Populations that live in areas less impacted by the conflict are usually able to meet basic food but not non-food needs.<sup>1092</sup> The same source indicated that about one million IDPs receive food assistance in the North-East, and that assistance accounts to about 70 % of their monthly caloric needs.<sup>1093</sup> FEWS NET further indicated that, in the North-East, food assistance to IDP camps decreased 28 % between 2023 and 2024 due a drop in funding and the closure of some IDP camps in Borno state. In the North and Central regions, most IDPs live in makeshift camps, and the size of assistance and beneficiaries is ‘limited’ due to lack of funding.<sup>1094</sup>

<sup>1085</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>1086</sup> WFP, HungerMap: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1087</sup> FEWS NET classifies food insecurity into five phases: Phase 1, minimal, Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income; Phase 2, Stressed, Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies; Phase 3, Crisis, Households either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies; Phase 4, Emergency, Households either have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation; and Phase 5, Famine, households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. FEWS NET, What is the IPC?, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1088</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria acute food insecurity, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1089</sup> IPC, Cadré harmonisé, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1090</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>1091</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>1092</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1093</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>1094</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 7-8





### 3.5. Housing and living conditions

The aforementioned survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that 75 % of those interviewed were renting and 24 % owned the house or apartment they were living in. In Lagos, 26 % of respondents own their homes and 72 % rent accommodation.<sup>1095</sup> Nigeria's NBS 2024 household survey reported that seven out of ten households reported owning the dwelling they live in, with higher ownership rates in rural areas (80.1 %) compared to urban settings (49.1 %).<sup>1096</sup>

According to Nigeria's NBS household survey, the main roofing materials are zinc sheets (60.3 % of houses) and corrugated iron sheets (19.6 %), the main material for flooring is smooth cement (67.2 %), and the walls are mostly made of concrete (61.5 %), except in the North-East and North-West where around 56.6 % of houses' walls are made of mud. The same source noted that one in four households in Nigeria do not have access to toilet facilities.<sup>1097</sup> Most Nigerian households obtain drinking water from tube wells or boreholes (40.6 % in the dry season and 37.9 % in the rainy season), followed by dug wells (12.9 % in dry season and 13.6 % in rainy season), and surface water.<sup>1098</sup>

According to FEWS NET, 19 % of those interviewed managed to afford housing costs, including electricity, heating, water, and rent, a decrease from 26 % in 2023; whereas 45 % 'hardly managed', and 6 % could not manage to afford housing costs.<sup>1099</sup> About 53 % of those interviewed in Lagos indicated that they 'hardly managed' to afford the costs, while 6 % indicated that they could not.<sup>1100</sup> The survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that there was a 'deterioration' in the ability to provide for basic consumer goods, with 9 % of respondents indicating that they could do so in 2024, a decrease from 17 % in 2023.<sup>1101</sup>

Regarding access to the necessary hygiene products, the survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that 30 % indicated 'always' having access (a decrease from 40 % in 2023), 33 % 'just about', 27 % 'hardly', and 7 % 'never'. In Lagos, about 24 % indicated that they 'always' had access, while 10 % indicated that they 'did not'.<sup>1102</sup>

Regarding access to clean drinking water, the survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that 68 % of those interviewed 'always have access', 20 % 'sometimes', 7 % 'seldom', and 5 % 'never'.<sup>1103</sup> Germany's BMZ indicated

<sup>1095</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 28

<sup>1096</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>1097</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>1098</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>1099</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 6, 11

<sup>1100</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1101</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1102</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 8, 12

<sup>1103</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 7



that around 30 % of the population has access to safe drinking water, and most people do not have access to basic sanitation.<sup>1104</sup>

Regarding access to internet and Wi-Fi, the survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that 49 % of those interviewed ‘always’ had access, 29 % ‘sometimes’, 10 % ‘seldomly’, and 11 % ‘never’.<sup>1105</sup> In Lagos, about 45 % ‘always’ had access, while 12 % indicated that they ‘did not’.<sup>1106</sup>

### 3.5.1. Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs

UNHCR indicated that, at the end of 2024, over 60 % of IDPs lived in host communities, and 40 % in camps with limited basic services.<sup>1107</sup> In Borno state, for example, there were over two million IDPs, with 900 000 lacking electricity, clean water, shelter, and other essential services. Although Borno aided around 3 200 IDP households with cash, food, and shelter, inflation and currency devaluation hindered these state efforts.<sup>1108</sup> According to UNHCR, 46 % of IDP sites in the North-East are located in flood-prone and overcrowded areas, and IDPs often lack land tenure agreements, leaving them vulnerable to eviction.<sup>1109</sup> In the South-South, 78 % of refugees live in host communities, ‘integrating with ease and able to work’.<sup>1110</sup> The same source indicated that about 1 900 refugees were enrolled in social protection policies and 500 in health insurance plans in Cross River State and Akwa Ibom.<sup>1111</sup>

UNHCR indicated that the proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements in 2024, with access to basic facilities, was 2.08 % among IDPs and 100 % among refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>1112</sup> The proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing in 2024 was 62.1 % for IDPs, 28.43 % for refugees and asylum seekers, and 98.11 % of returnees. The same source indicated that 5.12 % of IDPs and 11.82 % of refugees and asylum seekers had access to electricity. Additionally, 45 830 IDPs and 27 400 refugees and asylum seekers received shelter and housing assistance.<sup>1113</sup> In Borno state, the government and UNHCR provided, in 2024, 110 ‘sustainable housing units’ to returnees, and over 2 900 ‘vulnerable’ households were supported with emergency shelter.<sup>1114</sup> In the South-South, 104 internally displaced families received assistance to repair their homes.<sup>1115</sup> UNHCR also trained over 15 500 refugee households on water treatment and safe storage; supported the deployment of real-time monitoring devices and data collection for 15 water facilities across refugee settlements in Benue and Cross River States; and built 500 latrines and 566 handwashing facilities, benefitting approximately 10 000 people.<sup>1116</sup>

<sup>1104</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1105</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1106</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1107</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1108</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1109</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>1110</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>1111</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>1112</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>1113</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), pp. 19-20

<sup>1114</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>1115</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>1116</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 23



FEWS NET noted that most urban IDPs in the North-West, particularly in Sokoto, Katsina, and Zamfara states, resort to ‘negative livelihood coping strategies’ including begging and prostitution to deal with food insecurity, and the worst-off households rely on food-based coping strategies, including skipping meals or going days without eating’.<sup>1117</sup>

### 3.5.2.Lagos and Abuja

According to a report by The World Bank and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland, ‘[w]hile Lagos has the smallest landmass among Nigeria’s 36 states (at 3,500 per square km), Lagos is the most densely populated state, with approximately 8,000 persons per square km, which is 40 times Nigeria’s average of 200 persons per square km’.<sup>1118</sup> Sources indicated that the rising sea-level is making it harder to find suitable building grounds.<sup>1119</sup> Coastal areas are particularly affected, and the local government has advised residents of Ikoyi, Lekki, Victoria Island, and the coastal areas of Epe and Badagry to be wary of backflow due to the high tide in the Lagos lagoon.<sup>1120</sup> The Sun reported, however, that Lagos has undertaken land reclamation initiatives to restore land areas and transform submerged or waterlogged lands into inhabitable areas.<sup>1121</sup>

Sources blame the floodings to shoreline erosion as a consequence of waterfront development.<sup>1122</sup> Sources indicated that Lagos is facing a housing crisis.<sup>1123</sup> According to a report by the Roland Igbinoba Real Foundation for Housing and Urban Development (RIRFHUD),<sup>1124</sup> Lagos has about 2.58 million housing units and a housing deficit of 3.3 million units.<sup>1125</sup> Sources reported that residents of Lagos are choosing co-living spaces due to unaffordability and housing deficits.<sup>1126</sup> The RIRFHUD report indicated that over 618 000 units are ‘either structurally unsafe, severely overcrowded, or lacking essential services such as clean water, proper sanitation, and electricity’.<sup>1127</sup> In January 2024, Punch reported that rents in Lagos increased by 91.32 % over the previous five years, with a two-bedroom apartment in Epe, one of the cheapest areas in the state, renting for as low as 350 000 Naira [197 Euros] per year.<sup>1128</sup>

<sup>1117</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1118</sup> World Bank (The) and Switzerland, Lagos Multi-Sector Analytical Review and Engagement Framework, June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>1119</sup> DW, Lagos' housing crisis and a vision for the future, 26 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1120</sup> Guardian (The), Rising sea levels, illegal sand mining hurt Lagos homes, coastal communities, 10 June 2014, [url](#); Republic (The), The luxury apartment complex in Lagos, 21 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1121</sup> Sun (The), Land Reclamation in Lagos 2010 – 2024, 29 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1122</sup> Guardian (The), Rising sea levels, illegal sand mining hurt Lagos homes, coastal communities, 10 June 2014, [url](#); Republic (The), The luxury apartment complex in Lagos, 21 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1123</sup> Guardian (The), Lagos housing deficit hits 3.4m, over 70% residents remain renters, 7 July 2025, [url](#); okayafrica, Young Nigerians Turn to Shared Living as Lagos Faces a Housing Crisis, 10 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1124</sup> RIRFHUD is a corporate social responsibility effort and a non-governmental initiative aimed at providing information and analytics to the development of the housing market in Nigeria. RIRFHUD, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1125</sup> Punch, Lagos delivers 2.5m housing units amid 3.4m deficit – Report, 7 July 2025, [url](#). See also: Guardian (The), Lagos housing deficit hits 3.4m, over 70% residents remain renters, 7 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1126</sup> Guardian (The), Lagos housing deficit hits 3.4m, over 70% residents remain renters, 7 July 2025, [url](#); okayafrica, Young Nigerians Turn to Shared Living as Lagos Faces a Housing Crisis, 10 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1127</sup> Punch, Lagos delivers 2.5m housing units amid 3.4m deficit – Report, 7 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1128</sup> Punch, Lagos rents soar by 91% in five years, 22 January 2024, [url](#)



Regarding Abuja, The Nation reported that rents in Abuja increased by over 50 % ‘in recent times’, and that the city is facing a shortage of over 1.7 million housing units.<sup>1129</sup> Sources indicated that housing costs are ‘exorbitant’,<sup>1130</sup> with rents for studio apartments ranging from 1 000 to more than 1 300 US dollars per year, considering that the average annual salary is less than 1 000 US dollars, forcing many into overcrowded slums or makeshift housing.<sup>1131</sup> Nairametrics, a Nigerian news source, similarly reported that, according to locals, rent in Abuja is ‘outrageous’, with an apartment costing between 400 and 800 US dollars, plus agent fees and ‘other expenses’.<sup>1132</sup> The Nation reported that, since most landlords rely on rental income, the rising cost of living leads to higher rent increases in a ‘vicious circle’ that affects the ‘financially strained’ who are forced into overcrowded and inadequate accommodations.<sup>1133</sup>

### 3.6. Education

Literacy rates vary according to the source, the age range, and the year. The 2020 Human Capital Index, updated in October 2024, indicated that the literacy rate among young Nigerians aged 15 to 24 is 75 %.<sup>1134</sup> The World Bank’s most recent statistics on adult literacy indicated that, in 2021, 53.3 % of females was literate in comparison to 73.7 % of males, and that in the lower-middle income class, the rates were 71.4 % for females and 83.7 % for males.<sup>1135</sup> Other sources indicated that illiteracy rate stands at around 40 %.<sup>1136</sup> Latest UNICEF available data from 2021 indicated that around 73 % of children between the ages of 15 and 24 are literate, although rates also vary according to gender, geographical area, wealth, and ethnicity:

- gender: Male (79 %), female (71 %);
- area: Urban (92 %), rural (59 %);
- wealth: Wealthiest (97 %), poorest (32 %);
- ethnicity: Igbo (97 %), Edo (95 %), Ibibio (94 %), Yoruba (92 %), and Ijaw (90 %).<sup>1137</sup>

Nigeria’s NBS household survey provided the following regarding literacy rates for 2024:

- national rate: 60.9 %, females (56 %), males (65.8 %);
- urban, total (78.5 %), females (76.2 %), males (81 %);
- rural, total (54 %), females (48 %), males (60 %).<sup>1138</sup>

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<sup>1129</sup> Nation (The), Abuja residents groan under high rent, 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1130</sup> Borgen Project (The), The divide between wealth and poverty in Abuja, 27 June 2025, [url](#). See also: Nation (The), Abuja residents groan under high rent, 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1131</sup> Borgen Project (The), The divide between wealth and poverty in Abuja, 27 June 2025, [url](#). See also: Nation (The), Abuja residents groan under high rent, 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1132</sup> Nairametrics, Scarcity of affordable housing options in Abuja traps poor Nigerians in slums, 4 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1133</sup> Nation (The), Abuja residents groan under high rent, 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1134</sup> World Bank (The), Human Capital, Country Brief: Nigeria, October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1135</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1136</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#); Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1137</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria Education Fact Sheets, 2023, [url](#), pp. 17-18

<sup>1138</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 13



Primary education is free and compulsory.<sup>1139</sup> Nigeria's annual per capita spending in education increased from 4 739 Naira [2.66 Euros] in 2023 to 6 447 Naira [3.62 Euros] in 2024, or 0.6 % of the GDP.<sup>1140</sup> Despite an increased spending in education, Nigeria's expenditure overall is far below the global benchmark of 4-6 % of GDP.<sup>1141</sup> According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the 'current spending levels remain grossly inadequate to address the challenges of access and quality in education'.<sup>1142</sup>

The number of out-of-school children varies according to the source. The UNICEF website indicated that 10.5 million children aged 5-14 were not in school, 61 % of children aged 6-11 attended primary school regularly, and 35.6 % of children aged 36-59 months received early childhood education.<sup>1143</sup> UNICEF noted that in the north the situation is 'bleaker', with a net attendance rate of 53%.<sup>1144</sup> PwC indicated that over 18 million children were out-of-school in 2024, which was considered the 'highest number globally'.<sup>1145</sup> The survey by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and NOIPolls Limited indicated that, according to those surveyed by August 2024 and who had children aged 15 years old or younger, 88 % indicated that all their children were able to attend school, 10 % that 'some' of their children were able to attend school, and 1 % that they were not able to send their children to school.<sup>1146</sup>

The UNICEF website indicated that gender, geography, and poverty contributed to educational marginalisation, particularly affecting girls in the North-East and North-West, where female primary net attendance rates were around 47 %.<sup>1147</sup> In north-eastern and north-western states, 29 % and 35 % of Muslim children, respectively, received Qur'anic education, 'which does not include basic skills such as literacy and numeracy'; the government considered children attending such schools 'to be officially out-of-school'.<sup>1148</sup> In north-eastern Nigeria, at least 802 schools were closed, 497 classrooms destroyed, and another 1 392 damaged but repairable.<sup>1149</sup>

### 3.6.1. Higher education

Sources indicated that many young Nigerians see a university degree as the 'only' path to success.<sup>1150</sup> Vocational education is seen in Nigeria as a 'second-class' option, chosen when admission to university fails, which discourages talented people from pursuing college education.<sup>1151</sup> Over 60 % of Nigerians in tertiary education are enrolled in technical and

<sup>1139</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1140</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 60

<sup>1141</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), pp. 59-60

<sup>1142</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 60

<sup>1143</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1144</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1145</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 60

<sup>1146</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 9-10

<sup>1147</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1148</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1149</sup> UNICEF, The challenge, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1150</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria's economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1151</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#); Business Day, National development through vocational education, 25 June 2025, [url](#)



vocational training.<sup>1152</sup> Sources noted, however, that industries such as technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing struggle to find qualified professionals, forcing them to recruit from abroad or invest heavily in staff training.<sup>1153</sup>

Nigerian newspaper Punch reported that, according to the Director-General of the National Power Training Institute, skills in Nigeria are disappearing ‘at an alarming rate’.<sup>1154</sup> The same source reported that six out of ten graduating Nigerians lack the necessary competencies required in the job market, and that tradespeople graduating in other countries in the region such as Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo, are more qualified than their Nigerian counterparts.<sup>1155</sup> Business Day reported that ‘many’ Nigerian graduates in business, for example, find their academic knowledge ‘insufficient’ for the labour market, and that in fields that require specialised training such as software developers, cybersecurity, and data analysis, prospective candidates do not meet the required competencies.<sup>1156</sup> Daily Trust reported that common deficiencies in tertiary education include communication, information technology, and decision-making skills, which force businesses to invest in costly retraining initiatives.<sup>1157</sup> The cost of some programs is also out of reach for many Nigerians, with a standard boot camp on coding costing between 200 000 [110 Euros] and one million Naira [554 Euros].<sup>1158</sup>

According to Nigerian media source Business Day, the university curriculum has not changed much in decades and focuses less on practical or digital skills.<sup>1159</sup> While some private universities and other tertiary institutions are adding more industry-relevant courses, public institutions lag behind due to bureaucratic constraints.<sup>1160</sup> Daily Trust similarly reported that higher education institutions focus heavily on theory and less on applied learning, which leaves students unable to compete in the labour market.<sup>1161</sup> The same source noted that the private sector is not very involved in shaping academic curricula, ‘resulting in a disconnect between what students learn and what employers need’.<sup>1162</sup>

In April 2024, the President signed into law the Student Loan (Access to Higher Education) Act of 2024 to ‘guarantee sustainable higher education and functional skill development for all Nigerian students and youths’.<sup>1163</sup> Under the Act, eligible Nigerian students can access zero interest loans to pay for higher education within Nigeria.<sup>1164</sup>

In April 2024, the government launched an initiative through its Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to train five million Nigerian artisans per year in an effort to ‘empower’ them with practical

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<sup>1152</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria’s informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 58

<sup>1153</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#); Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1154</sup> Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1155</sup> Punch, Nigeria’s shrinking skills gaps, 17 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1156</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1157</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1158</sup> Business Day, Widening skills gap keeps millions of Nigerians jobless, 19 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1159</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1160</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1161</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1162</sup> Business Day, Five rail transport projects that can shape Nigeria’s economy, 24 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1163</sup> Nigeria, The State House, In Detail: The Student Loan (Access to Higher Education) Act, 2024, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1164</sup> Nigeria, NELFUND, Frequently Asked Questions, n.d., [url](#)



knowledge in trades such as welding, plumbing, and information technology.<sup>1165</sup> On 27 June 2024, Punch reported that the training would be conducted in ‘batches’ of 100 000, starting with a ‘pilot phase’ of 100 000.<sup>1166</sup> In May 2025, sources reported that the ITF had trained 29 000 Nigerians since 2024.<sup>1167</sup> Other programs include N-Power, which offers training in areas such as agriculture and hardware maintenance, and Three Million Technical Talent (3MTT), which offers training in information technology.<sup>1168</sup> Daily Trust reported, however, that limited funding, inconsistent monitoring, and high dropout rates continue to affect the long-term impact of these initiatives.<sup>1169</sup> The same source reported that the private sector and local NGOs also have training programs in areas such as design, coding, entrepreneurship, and digital skills, but with limited budgets.<sup>1170</sup>

Daily Trust reported that many training centres lack qualified instructors and essential infrastructure, such as modern tools, digital equipment, and adequate classroom space.<sup>1171</sup>

### 3.6.2. Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs

According to UNHCR, the proportion of child and young refugees, and asylum seekers, enrolled in primary and secondary education in Southern states in 2024 was 53.66 % and 39.2 %, respectively.<sup>1172</sup> The enrolment rate in primary education increased from 49 % to 54 % in 2024, while the rate for secondary education was at 39 %.<sup>1173</sup> The enrolment rate in tertiary and higher education for refugees and asylum seekers was 1.78 %.<sup>1174</sup>

The same source indicated that factors such as language, affordability, and school fees prevented full access and retention of child and young refugees in schools.<sup>1175</sup> In 2024, UNHCR enrolled around 3 500 refugee children in public schools in Benue, Cross River, and Tabara, and provided assistance to cover school fees, examination costs, and educational materials.<sup>1176</sup> UNHCR also provided, through local funded programs, training in digital services to over 2 000 student refugees, and granted over 150 university scholarships.<sup>1177</sup> UNHCR indicated that vocational training benefitted 1 250 refugee women, 900 received microfinance to start businesses, and 20 childcare centres were open to support women's participation in leadership and economic activities.<sup>1178</sup>

Without providing further information, a senior representative at NCFRMI indicated that returnees arriving through assisted return programmes usually receive some form of

<sup>1165</sup> News Reservoir, Industrial Training Fund set to empower five million Nigerians artisans annually – DG, 24 April 2024, [url](#); People’s Gazette, FG launches initiative to empower five million artisans yearly, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1166</sup> Punch, FG begins training for 5 million youths, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1167</sup> NAN, ITF trained 29,000 youths in various skills in 2024, says D-G., 24 May 2025, [url](#); Peoples’ Gazette, ITF trained 29,000 youths in various skills in 2024: Official , 24 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1168</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1169</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1170</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1171</sup> Daily Trust, Bridging the Gap: Why Nigeria Needs Skills-Based Education for Its Youth, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1172</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1173</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1174</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>1175</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>1176</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>1177</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>1178</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 7



reintegration support, and in cases of forced returns, the NCFRMI typically refer the case to the Ministry of Education; children of elementary school age can be enrolled in Nigeria's universal basic education system, which is free. The same source indicated, however, that 'children of returnees who return unnoticed or without formal documentation often fall through the cracks and miss out on this support'.<sup>1179</sup>

### 3.6.3. Lagos and Abuja

In Lagos, about 84 % indicated that all their children were able to attend school, while 4 % indicated that 'none' of their children were able to do so.<sup>1180</sup> UNHCR indicated that in 2021 in Lagos, the out-of-school rate was 3 % in primary education, 4 % for junior secondary, and 23 % for senior secondary.<sup>1181</sup> In Abuja, the out-of-school rates were 9 % for primary education, 11 % for junior secondary, and 20 % for senior secondary.<sup>1182</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicated in 2024 that Nigeria was facing a 'learning crisis' due to the inability of most children at age 10 to read and understand an age appropriate text.<sup>1183</sup>

## 3.7. Healthcare

For detailed information on healthcare system in Nigeria, including access and availability of medical treatment, see [EUAA Medical Country of Origin Information \(MedCOI\) Report: Nigeria, April 2022](#).

Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that by August 2024, the most common medical consultation facilities used by Nigerians are chemist shops (36.6 % of females and 40.7 % of males), which are widespread relied upon, followed by hospitals (22 % of females and 25.7 % of males).<sup>1184</sup> The least visited facilities were consultants' homes, patients' homes, and traditional and faith-based healers. The NBS survey also pointed out that not seeking medical attention is an increasing tendency in Nigeria (9.9 % of females and 9.7 % of males), particularly in rural areas, with main reasons including that the illness was not serious enough (70.3 % of cases) and the cost associated with a medical visit (21.6 %). The same source indicated that in 63.9 % of visits to a health practitioner, dentist, or traditional healer, patients were not charged, while those who had to pay, paid an average of 2 473 Naira per visit [1.4 Euros].<sup>1185</sup> The average out-of-pocket hospitalisation costs per person was 44 189 Naira [24.6 Euros], and the average out-of-pocket cost for medications was 5 083 Naira [2.8 Euros].<sup>1186</sup>

According to PwC, Nigeria's per capita expenditure in healthcare in 2024 was 6 361 Naira [3.53 Euros], which represented 0.6 % of the GDP, far below the 6 % recommended by the

<sup>1179</sup> Senior representative at NCFRMI, online interview with EUAA, 6 August 2025

<sup>1180</sup> Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, and NOIIPolls, Nigeria: Socio-Economic Survey 2024, [url](#), pp. 9-10

<sup>1181</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria Education Fact Sheets, 2023, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>1182</sup> UNICEF, Nigeria Education Fact Sheets, 2023, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>1183</sup> UNESCO, Nigeria: Education Country Brief, January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1184</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>1185</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>1186</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 18



World Health Organization (WHO). Also, out-of-pocket payments accounted for over 70 % of total healthcare spending, particularly affecting low-income households. The same source pointed out that due to poor healthcare, productivity losses amount to 1 % of GDP annually.<sup>1187</sup>

According to the UNFPA, Nigeria's average life expectancy for 2025 was 55 years for women and 54 years for men.<sup>1188</sup> Germany's BMZ indicated that the average life expectancy in 2024 was 53 years, one of the lowest in the world.<sup>1189</sup>

Cases of HIV<sup>1190</sup> and tuberculosis are common in Nigeria.<sup>1191</sup> and infant mortality is 'high'.<sup>1192</sup> UNICEF indicated that between January and April 2025, cholera outbreaks led to 1 149 suspected cases and 28 reported deaths in 25 states, with a fatality rate of 2.4 %.<sup>1193</sup> Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that, by August 2024, the most common illness reported by people in Nigeria is malaria, with 66.8 % of reports, followed by typhoid (18.4 %).<sup>1194</sup> The survey also indicated that the prevalence of disability increases significantly after the age of 50, reaching its highest level at 65 years-old.<sup>1195</sup>

### 3.7.1. Women

The maternal mortality ratio was 993 per 100 000 live births in 2023, compared to 197.3 in the world and 442.1 in Africa.<sup>1196</sup> In 2024, the maternal mortality rate was 512 deaths per 100 000 live births,<sup>1197</sup> a reduction from 1 344 in 2000 and 993 in 2023.<sup>1198</sup> Maternal mortality rates are more prevalent in Northern Nigeria, in rural areas, and among the poorest households.<sup>1199</sup> The WHO 2023 report on Trends in Maternal Mortality from 2000-2020 revealed that nearly 28.5% of global maternal deaths occur in Nigeria, with women in Nigeria having 1 in 19 lifetime risk of dying during pregnancy, childbirth, or postpartum compared to the 1 in 4 900 in most developed countries.<sup>1200</sup> The high rate of maternal mortality rate is the result of, among other things, the criminalisation of abortion, which pushes women into illegal and unsafe abortions,<sup>1201</sup> and the limited access to reproductive and sexual health services.<sup>1202</sup> Access to quality health services and emergency obstetric care is not widely available<sup>1203</sup> due to

<sup>1187</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), pp. 59, 61

<sup>1188</sup> UNFPA, State of the World Population Report 2025 'The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world', 16 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 139

<sup>1189</sup> Germany, BMZ, Nigeria – Social situation: Pervasive poverty and corruption, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1190</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#); UNICEF, Health & HIV, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1191</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#); New South Wales, Ministry of Health, List of countries where tuberculosis (TB) is common, 28 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1192</sup> Lloyds Bank, Nigeria: Economic and Political Overview, May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1193</sup> UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, January-April 2025, 15 May 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>1194</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>1195</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>1196</sup> WHO, Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 00 live births), 7 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1197</sup> PwC, 2025 Nigeria Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025, [url](#), p. 61

<sup>1198</sup> World Bank (The), Nigeria: Featured indicators, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1199</sup> Nigeria, Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF, The State of Nigeria's Children: Summary of the 2024 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1200</sup> WHO, Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2020, 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>1201</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025– Nigeria, 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1202</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1203</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)



underfunding and mismanagement of the healthcare system, and poor maintenance of healthcare infrastructure.<sup>1204</sup>

Family planning is ‘often unavailable or inaccessible’, particularly for those living in poverty.<sup>1205</sup> According to UNFPA, Nigeria is well below the global average of women using modern contraceptives (16 % in Nigeria, 44 % worldwide), and that many women do not use contraceptives for several reasons, mainly because they do not know how to use them or because their husbands and partners forbid them, in addition to common misconceptions such as the belief that contraceptives cause sterilisations or that they should be used after the third or fourth child.<sup>1206</sup> The USDOS report indicated that in some states, ‘health-care workers frequently required women to provide proof of spousal consent prior to accessing contraceptives’ and that ‘unmarried women were denied emergency contraceptives by health-care providers’.<sup>1207</sup> The same source indicated that in northern Nigeria, where sharia law prevails, ‘societal and cultural norms prevented women from leaving the house unaccompanied, making reproductive health services less accessible’.<sup>1208</sup>

### 3.7.2. Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs

UNHCR indicated that in 2024, the South-South region, UNHCR and its partners provided support to 37 primary healthcare centres in the delivery of free services to refugees and host communities.<sup>1209</sup> In urban areas, UNHCR facilitated free consultations at Primary Health Care facilities for over 900 IDPs and managed over 200 referrals for secondary or tertiary care.<sup>1210</sup> The same source indicated that the proportion of asylum seekers and refugees with access to healthcare services in Nigeria in 2024 was 86.76 %.<sup>1211</sup>

### 3.7.3. Lagos and Abuja

In 2024, the Lagos government issued an Executive Order to mandate compulsory health insurance for all residents of the state, domesticating the National Health Insurance Authority Act of 2022.<sup>1212</sup> The Ministry of Health of the aforementioned state indicated that a first phase of the healthcare plan would be focused on the formal sector; a second phase, on the informal sector; and a third phase, on ‘other population groups’.<sup>1213</sup>

In an effort to increase healthcare capacity in the Federal Capital Territory Minister announced the hiring of 34 resident doctors from a total of 60 that are expected to cover different areas

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<sup>1204</sup> WHO, Country Health Systems and Services Profiles Nigeria, 2025, [url](#), p. 327

<sup>1205</sup> UNFPA, The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 90

<sup>1206</sup> UNFPA, The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 90

<sup>1207</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1208</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1209</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1210</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1211</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1212</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Health, Lagos Inaugurates Implementation Team For Mandatory Health Insurance, 22 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1213</sup> Nigeria, Lagos, Ministry of Health, Lagos Inaugurates Implementation Team For Mandatory Health Insurance, 22 June 2025, [url](#)



including internal medicine, surgery, anaesthesiology, ophthalmology, obstetrics, and gynaecology.<sup>1214</sup> In several Abuja's poorest communities, service providers provide family planning contraceptives.<sup>1215</sup> No additional information on this topic, specifically regarding Abuja and relevant for the reference period of this report, could be found among all source consulted.

### 3.8. Availability of state support mechanism for individuals without social network

Nigeria's NBS indicated that by August 2024, about 40 % of Nigerians had a National Identity Number (NIN) or National Identity Card.<sup>1216</sup> TVCNews reported in September 2025 that, according to the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), over 123 million Nigerians 'have been captured in the National Identity database'.<sup>1217</sup>

ILO's ILOSTAT provided the following data from 2022 for Nigeria:

- population covered by at least one social protection benefit: 14.8 %
- persons above retirement age receiving a pension: 19.6 %
- unemployed receiving unemployment benefits: 0 %
- employed covered in the event of work injury: 10.1 %
- poor persons covered by social protection systems: 22.9 %
- vulnerable persons covered by social assistance: 10.1 %<sup>1218</sup>

The Jobberman report indicated that social networks are 'indispensable pillars' in economic activities and community cohesion, and that in Nigeria's informal sector, familial bonds extend beyond kinship, establishing a foundation of trust and economic exchange. The same source indicated that while family networks support knowledge sharing, financial pooling, and stability for entrepreneurs, community associations promote collaboration and solidarity, facilitating collective action and market access. Ethnic affiliations influence economic interactions through shared cultural norms, aiding in niche market access. Informal social networks, however, can be exclusive, often limiting participation of women, youth, and marginalised groups.<sup>1219</sup>

#### 3.8.1 Women and children

Nigeria's NBS household survey indicated that 22.3 % of households are headed by females - a 3.7 % increase from the previous survey of 2019.<sup>1220</sup> The region with most households

<sup>1214</sup> Punch, FCT minister approves employment of 34 resident doctors, 2 April 2025, [url](#); Nation (The), Wike approves employment of 34 doctors, 2 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1215</sup> UNFPA, The Real Fertility Crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 90

<sup>1216</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>1217</sup> TVCNews, 123m Nigerians Captured In National Identity Database – NIMC, 16 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1218</sup> ILO, ILOSTAT data explorer: Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1219</sup> Jobberman, Nigeria's informal sector: A Pathway to Sustainable Economic Transitions for Young People, 2024, [url](#), p. 60

<sup>1220</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 5



headed by females is the South-East (34.4 % of households), followed by South-South (30.8 %), and South-West (29.7 %).<sup>1221</sup>

Despite legal commitments, Nigerian women have continued to face widespread discrimination in both law and practice.<sup>1222</sup> Discriminatory elements can be found in various legal sources, including the Labour Act, customary law, sharia law, and even within the Constitution.<sup>1223</sup> Some of these legal provisions discriminate women with regards to nationality, citizenship, health, education, marital and parental rights, employment,<sup>1224</sup> inheritance and property rights.<sup>1225</sup> For more information see [2.3. Women and girls](#). The 2025 Global Gender Gap Report indicated that women in Nigeria have ‘near equal-rights’ as men in terms of access to financial services, and land and no-land assets, but they have ‘unequal rights’ compared to men in terms of inheritance rights for widows and daughters.<sup>1226</sup> The USDOS country report indicated that while there are no laws that prohibit women from owning land, ‘customary land tenure systems allowed only men to own land, with women gaining access to land only via marriage or family. Many customary practices did not recognise a woman’s right to inherit property, and many widows became destitute when their in-laws claimed the deceased husband’s property’.<sup>1227</sup>

Information on support services for females’ heads of households relevant for the reference period of this report, could not be found among all sources consulted within the time constraints of this report. A 2021 report by Canada’s IRB on female heads of households indicated that, according to academics who have researched social issues in Nigeria, there are no social support services or programmes for females heads of households.<sup>1228</sup> When asked about the availability of public services, including health, education, public transportation, childcare services and social assistance for females heads of households in Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt or Abuja, sources consulted by the IRB indicated that there is no public subsidy to cover these costs and that these services are not free.<sup>1229</sup> For more

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<sup>1221</sup> Nigeria, NBS, Nigeria General Household Survey - Panel (GHS-Panel) Wave 5 (2023/2024), 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>1222</sup> Njila, M. M., An analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Women Against Discriminatory Practices in Nigeria, 8 September 2024, [url](#), p. 82; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women’s Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1223</sup> For instance, Chapter III, Section 26 of the Constitution limits a Nigerian woman’s ability to confer citizenship on her foreign spouse. See Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#), Chapter III, Section 26; Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women’s Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1224</sup> Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women’s Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1225</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 – Nigeria, 26 February 2025, [url](#); Kehinde, O. J. and Abdulraheem, M., Prohibition of Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women’s Rights in Nigeria, 29 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1226</sup> WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025: Nigeria, Economic profiles, 11 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 287-288

<sup>1227</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#). See also: NAN, Girls have equal rights to inheritance as boys, 12 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1228</sup> Canada, IRB, NGA200797.E - Nigeria: Situation and treatment of single women and of women who head their own households, including their ability to live on their own and access housing, income, education, health care, and support services, particularly in Port Harcourt, Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos; impact of COVID-19 (2019–October 2021), 10 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>1229</sup> Canada, IRB, NGA200797.E - Nigeria: Situation and treatment of single women and of women who head their own households, including their ability to live on their own and access housing, income, education, health care, and support services, particularly in Port Harcourt, Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos; impact of COVID-19 (2019–October 2021), 10 November 2021, [url](#)



information see [2.3.2. Situation of unmarried, widowed, divorced women and women without support network](#).

Sources indicated that there are about 17.5 million orphans and vulnerable children nationwide,<sup>1230</sup> the world's second highest after India, with 30 million orphans.<sup>1231</sup> Christianity Today indicated that Nigeria has about 278 listed orphanages, and that the main causes of orphanhood are Nigeria's high mortality rate, violence and armed conflicts, teenage pregnancies, and the 'broken system' of adoption in Nigeria which, despite the low cost for Nigerian citizens (932 US dollars), it is underutilised and marred with cultural and bureaucratic barriers.<sup>1232</sup> See also [2.4 Children](#) .

### 3.8.2. Refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs

UNHCR indicated that by the end of 2024, Nigeria hosted over 127 000 refugees and asylum-seekers from 41 countries, with 19 % in settlements and 81 % in host communities, along with 3.5 million IDPs.<sup>1233</sup> According to UNHCR, the country maintained strong protection standards for refugees, offering access to jobs, education, healthcare, and social services; some states integrated refugees into social registers and development plans and allocated land for agricultural activities to promote economic inclusion.<sup>1234</sup> The same source indicated that refugees in Nigeria enjoy various rights, such as access to education for refugee children, freedom of movement and the right to live and work, although they occasionally face challenges like employment discrimination.<sup>1235</sup> 48.41 % of refugees and asylum seekers were employed at the end of 2024.<sup>1236</sup>

UNHCR indicated that Nigeria has not incorporated into domestic law the Kampala Convention,<sup>1237</sup> a regional instrument for the protection of IDPs.<sup>1238</sup> However, Nigeria has an IDP policy, which is aligned with the Kampala Convention, to assist IDPs.<sup>1239</sup> The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), a website of information and analysis on food insecurity created by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State, indicated that in the Northwest and Central states, most IDPs lived in makeshift camps and worked mostly in menial jobs to earn a limited income; others resorted to begging, prostitution and foraging.<sup>1240</sup> According to FEWS Net, in the North-East, the purchasing power among displaced households has plummeted due to increasing staple food prices and high reliance on market purchases.<sup>1241</sup> At the same time, growing competition for income-generating opportunities is pushing more households into urban areas, where they

<sup>1230</sup> Nairametrics, Nigerian Orphanages to consider supporting this Christmas season, 22 December 2024, [url](#); Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1231</sup> Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1232</sup> Christianity Today, Their Families Abandoned Them. Emeagwali Took Them In., 21 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1233</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1234</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1235</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1236</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>1237</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>1238</sup> African Union, Kampala Convention: African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internationally Displaced Persons in Africa, 2012, [url](#), Art. III

<sup>1239</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>1240</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>1241</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 11



continue to face significant consumption gaps.<sup>1242</sup> Some households engage in limited agricultural labour to earn limited income and increase food access.<sup>1243</sup>

In 2024, Boko Haram activity in the border between Nigeria and Cameroon led to the displacement into Adawama state of over 27 000 asylum-seekers; Nigerian authorities granted a three-year Temporary Protection Status (TPS) to over 10 000 claimants, and a two-year TPS to over 4 000 claimants.<sup>1244</sup>

UNHCR indicated that in Benue and other southern states, the limited presence of UN agencies and humanitarian actors hindered protection delivery to Cameroonian refugees and IDPs as access remained difficult due to insecurity, poor roads, mountainous terrains, and limited resources, worsened by floods. Additionally, economic inflation in 2024 reduced purchasing power and affected project delivery. The same source indicated that the proportion of people that received cash transfers and/or non-food items in 2024 was 35.71 % among IDPs and 47.84 % among refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>1245</sup> Additionally, 69 443 IDPs and 55 855 refugees and asylum seekers received cash assistance, an overall increase of 85 % from 2023 (from 34 000 people in 2023 to over 63 000 in 2024). Around 58 700 IDPs and 32 500 refugees and asylum seekers received non-food items.<sup>1246</sup> UNHCR indicated that the proportion in 2024 of people with a bank account among IDPs was 0.42 % and refugees and asylum seekers, 29.22 %.<sup>1247</sup>

UNHCR indicated that in 2024 the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority was 29.7 % for IDPs and 40.23 % for refugees and asylum seekers, and that the proportion of people with legally recognised identity documents or credentials was 51.78 % for IDPs and 46.01 % for refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>1248</sup> About 94 % of returnees in 2024 had legally recognised identity documents.<sup>1249</sup> As of December 2024, the government issued around 126 000 civil status documents in the North-East, including 52 000 birth certificates, 37 000 national identity cards, as well as marriage, divorce, and death certificates.<sup>1250</sup> In the South-South region, around 1 950 refugees were enrolled in state social registers, granting them access to services such as the Nigerian Identification Number (NIN) and bank accounts.<sup>1251</sup> In Benue state, over 39 000 IDPs were assisted with civil registration status; however, only about 13 000 certificates could be issued due to technical issues with digital registration.<sup>1252</sup> UNHCR indicated that the proportion of refugees and asylum seekers undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation was 84.18 %.<sup>1253</sup> The same source noted, however, that the proportion of people undergoing

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<sup>1242</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1243</sup> FEWS NET, Nigeria - Food Security Outlook, June 2025 – January 2025, 9 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 11-12

<sup>1244</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1245</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>1246</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), pp. 18-19

<sup>1247</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>1248</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>1249</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 25

<sup>1250</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>1251</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1252</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1253</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 11



asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim was 0.3 %.<sup>1254</sup>

### 3.9. Mobility and freedom of movement

As enshrined in Article 41 of the 1999 Constitution, '[e]very citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof (...).'<sup>1255</sup> No information on specific administrative requirements needed by Nigerian nationals to move/relocate across the country could be found among all sources consulted.<sup>1256</sup>

Sources reported that, in fact, checkpoints, insecurity and infrastructure gaps in some areas hinder freedom of movement in the country.<sup>1257</sup> Checkpoints are set up by both security forces and armed groups.<sup>1258</sup> State security forces reportedly mount checkpoints to collect illegal tolls, extort truckers,<sup>1259</sup> and in some areas, as part of curfews to address security-related events.<sup>1260</sup> Business Day reported that, according to the Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners, 53 checkpoints by security forces are located on the corridor that connects Lagos and Seme, Benin, making the travel longer and exposing travellers and truckers to extortion by security officials.<sup>1261</sup> Nigerian newspaper The Sun similarly reported that between Lagos and Onitsha, Anambra, commuters pass through over 60 security checkpoints, locally dubbed "collection checkpoints", where interrogations, extortions, and mistreatment, including floggings, harassment, beatings, and humiliations, by security forces have been reported.<sup>1262</sup> The same source also reported the existence of security forces' checkpoints in Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Anambra states.<sup>1263</sup>

The US Country Reports on Nigeria indicated that in areas under the influence or presence of Boko Haram, ISWAP, or Islamist groups associated with them, 'residents often found themselves subject to roadblocks, searches, and other restrictive security measures by authorities and other armed groups'.<sup>1264</sup>

For more information on road and travel security at county and state level see [EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025](#).

In 2024, the government of Nigeria, in collaboration with UNHCR, facilitated the voluntary return of 50 households (242 Nigerian refugees) from Minawao Camp in Cameroon to Bama,

<sup>1254</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>1255</sup> Nigeria, The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Updated with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Alterations (2010), 4<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2017) and 5<sup>th</sup> Alteration (2023), September 2024, [url](#), Art 41

<sup>1256</sup> See Bibliography

<sup>1257</sup> World Bank (The), The World Bank in Nigeria: Overview, 10 April 2025, [url](#); Business Day, Multiple checkpoints on Nigerian roads hindering trade growth – Experts, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1258</sup> The Sun, S-o-u-t-h-e-a-s-t: Outcry as roadblocks turn to cashpoints, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Business Day, Multiple checkpoints on Nigerian roads hindering trade growth – Experts, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1259</sup> The Sun, S-o-u-t-h-e-a-s-t: Outcry as roadblocks turn to cashpoints, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Business Day, Multiple checkpoints on Nigerian roads hindering trade growth – Experts, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1260</sup> The Guardian, 24-hour curfew hits Kaduna residents hard, markets, shops closed, 6 August 2024, [url](#); Daily Trust, Insecurity: Zamfara govt Imposes curfew along Sokoto, Katsina borders, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1261</sup> Business Day, Multiple checkpoints on Nigerian roads hindering trade growth – Experts, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1262</sup> The Sun, S-o-u-t-h-e-a-s-t: Outcry as roadblocks turn to cashpoints, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1263</sup> The Sun, S-o-u-t-h-e-a-s-t: Outcry as roadblocks turn to cashpoints, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1264</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 22 April 2024, [url](#)



Borno state.<sup>1265</sup> UNHCR also implemented ‘border monitoring’ with Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) with 11 000 families (39 000 individuals) who were granted ‘safe access, mostly spontaneous refugee returnees’.<sup>1266</sup>

The website of the Nigeria Immigration Service indicated that all passengers entering or leaving Nigeria need to produce Landing or Exit Cards,<sup>1267</sup> which are obtained online on the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) website within 96 hours before the travel.<sup>1268</sup> Nigerians returning with an expired passport can enter the country.<sup>1269</sup>

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) website indicated that there are five international and 11 domestic airports<sup>1270</sup> in the country.<sup>1271</sup>

### 3.9.1. International flights

#### Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos

MMIA (IATA<sup>1272</sup> code: LOS) is located in Ikeja, Lagos state, and is the major airport of the country.<sup>1273</sup> Originally known as Lagos Airport, MMIA consists of an international and a domestic terminal (MMA2),<sup>1274</sup> located one kilometre from each other, and is the main base for Nigeria’s largest airline, Air Peace.<sup>1275</sup> Flights to and from MMIA and MMA2, as provided by FlightRadar24 in August 2025, included:

Domestic flights:

- Abuja (Air Peace, Arik Air, Ibom Air, Nomad Aviation, United Nigeria Airlines)
- Akure (Green Afrtica)
- Asaba (Air Peace, United Nigeria Airlines)
- Benin (Air Peace, Green Africa)
- Calabar (Ibom Air)
- Enugu (Air Peace, Ibom Air, United Nigeria Airlines)
- Ilorin (Overland Airways)
- Jos (Arik Air, ValueJet)
- Kano (Aero, Air Peace, Nomad Aviation)

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<sup>1265</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 25

<sup>1266</sup> UNHCR, Annual Results Report 2024: Nigeria, 29 May 2025, [url](#), p. 25

<sup>1267</sup> Nigeria, NIS, Landing and Exit Cards, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1268</sup> Business Day, Explainer: New immigration rules you must know before travelling in, out of Nigeria, 13 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1269</sup> Punch, Nigerians with expired passports can return home, says FG, 24 December 2024, [url](#); Business Day, Explainer: New immigration rules you must know before travelling in, out of Nigeria, 13 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>1270</sup> The ‘Domestic airports’ webpage indicates that there are 16 ‘domestic airports’; however, 4 out of the 16 airports are domestic terminals in the international airports of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt. Nigeria, FAAN, Domestic Airports, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1271</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Our Airports, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1272</sup> The International Air Transport Association (IATA) code is used to uniquely identify locations like airports . See IATA, homepage, nd. [url](#)

<sup>1273</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, MMIA, Lagos, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1274</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, MMIA, Lagos, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1275</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, MMIA, Lagos, n.d., [url](#)



- Minna (Overland Airways)
- Owerri (United Nigeria Airlines)
- Port Harcourt (Arik Air, Ibom Air, ValueJet)
- Uyo (Ibom Air)
- Warri (Arik Air, Overland Airways)

#### International flights:

- Abidjan (Air Peace)
- Accra (Air Peace)
- Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines)
- Amsterdam (KLM)
- Atlanta (Delta Airlines)
- Banjul (ValueJet)
- Beirut (MEA)
- Cairo (Egyptair)
- Casablanca (Royal Air Maroc)
- Doha (Qatar Airways)
- Dubai (Emirates)
- Frankfurt (Lufthansa)
- Istanbul (Turkish Airlines)
- Johannesburg (South African Airways)
- Kigali (RwandAir)
- Lome (ASKY Airlines, Jeju Air)
- London (Air Peace, British Airways)
- Luanda (TAAG Angola Airlines)
- Malabo (Jeju Air)
- Nairobi (Kenya Airways)
- Paris (Air France)
- Santiago de Chile (Ethiopian Airlines)
- Sao Paulo (Ethiopian Airlines)
- Washington (United Airlines)<sup>1276</sup>

#### **Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja**

NAIA (IATA code: ABV) is Nigeria's second busiest airport and is located about 12 kilometres west of Abuja.<sup>1277</sup> Flights to and from NAIA, as provided by FlightRadar24 in August 2025, included:

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<sup>1276</sup> FlightRadar24, LOS/DNMM, Lagos Murtala Mohammed Airport, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1277</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, NAIA, Abuja, n.d., [url](#)





#### Domestic Flights:

- Asaba (United Nigeria Airlines)
- Bauchi (Rano Air)
- Lagos (Arik Air, Green Africa, Ibom Air, United Nigeria Airlines, ValueJet)
- Uyo (Ibom Air)
- Benin (Nomad Aviation)
- Port Harcourt (Arik Air, NG Eagle)
- Katsina (Rano Air)
- Yola (Aero)
- Sokoto (Rano Air)
- Kano (Air Peace)
- Maiduguri (Nomad Aviation)
- Enugu (Air Peace)
- Owerri (United Nigeria Airlines)
- Ilorin (Overland Airways)

#### International flights:

- Algiers (Air Algerie)
- Accra (Africa World Airlines)
- Casablanca (Royal Air Maroc)
- Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines)
- Maasai Mara (United Nigeria Airlines)
- Abidjan (Air Côte d'Ivoire)
- Douala (Air Côte d'Ivoire)
- Doha (Qatar Airways)
- Frankfurt (Lufthansa)
- Niamey (ASKY Airlines)
- Lomé (ASKY Airlines)
- Paris (Air France)
- Istanbul (Turkish Airlines)
- N'Djamena (ASKY Airlines)
- London (British Airways)<sup>1278</sup>

#### **Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA), Kano**

MAKIA (IATA code: KAN) is located in Kano (the second largest city in Nigeria), Kano state, in the North West, and is the main airport serving Kano and Northern Nigeria in general.<sup>1279</sup> Most

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<sup>1278</sup> FlightRadar24, Abuja routes and destinations, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1279</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Makia, Kano, n.d., [url](#)





international flights serve the large Sudanese community in the country as well as Muslim pilgrimages to Mecca, Saudi Arabia.<sup>1280</sup> Flights to and from MAKIA, as provided by FlightRadar24 in August 2025, included:

Domestic Flights:

- Abuja (Air Peace, Rano Air)
- Lagos (Cally Air, Nomad Aviation, Rano Air, United Nigeria Airlines,)
- Sokoto (Rano Air)

International flights:

- Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines)
- Jeddah (Saudia)
- Cairo (Egyptair)
- Sharjah (Ethiopian Airlines)<sup>1281</sup>

#### **Port Harcourt International Airport (PHIA), Port Harcourt**

PHIA (IATA code: PHC) is located in Omagwa, a suburb of Port Harcourt, the capital and largest city of Rivers State, and is the third-busiest airport in Nigeria.<sup>1282</sup> PHIA is well connected with major cities worldwide due to its proximity to Nigeria's oil and gas industry.<sup>1283</sup> Flights to and from PHIA, as provided by FlightRadar24 in August 2025, included:

Domestic Flights:

- Abuja (Air Peace, Arik Air, Ibom Air)
- Lagos (Air Peace, Arik Air, United Nigeria Airlines)

International flights:

- Libreville (Afrijet)
- Malabo (ValueJet)<sup>1284</sup>

#### **Akanu Ibiam International Airport (ENU), Enugu**

ENU is located in Enugu, the capital of Enugu State, southeastern Nigeria.<sup>1285</sup> It serves Enugu and nearby cities, such as Abakaliki, Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, Afikpo, Okigwe, Nsukka, Ugep, Orlu, Idah, Otukpo and Ogoja.<sup>1286</sup> Flights to and from ENU, as provided by FlightRadar24 in August 2025, included:

<sup>1280</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Makia, Kano, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1281</sup> FlightRadar24, Kano routes and destinations, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1282</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, PH International Airport, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1283</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, PH International Airport, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1284</sup> FlightRadar24, Port Harcourt routes and destinations, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1285</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Akanu Ibiam International Airport. (Enugu), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1286</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Akanu Ibiam International Airport. (Enugu), n.d., [url](#)





Domestic Flights:

- Abuja (Air Peace, Ibom Air, United Nigeria Airlines)
- Lagos (Air Peace, Ibom Air, United Nigeria Airlines)

International flights:

- Addis Ababa (Ethiopian Airlines)<sup>1287</sup>

### 3.9.2. Domestic flights

The website of the FAAN indicated that, in addition to the domestic terminals in the international airports of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt, Nigeria has domestic airports in Ilorin (Ilorin International Airport, ILR), Sokoto (Sultan Abubakar III International Airport, SKO), Yola (Yola Airport, YOL), Ibadan (Ibadan Airport, IBA), Kaduna (Kaduna International Airport, KAD), Katsina (Katsina Airport, DKA), Maiduguri (Maiduguri International Airport, MIU), Makurdi (Makurdi Airport, MDI), Minna (Minna Airport, MXJ), Akure (Akure Airport, AKR), Calabar (Calabar Margaret Ekpo International Airport, CBQ).<sup>1288</sup>

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) website indicated that as of August 2025, 23 domestic airlines were active and 22 foreign air carriers had permission to operate in the country.<sup>1289</sup> Nigerian airlines serving domestic and international destinations included Arik Air, Air Peace, Overland Airways, Ibom Air, United Nigeria Airlines, Green Africa, and ValueJet.<sup>1290</sup>

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<sup>1287</sup> FlightRadar24, Enugu routes and destinations, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1288</sup> Nigeria, FAAN, Domestic airports, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1289</sup> Nigeria, NCAA, Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1290</sup> Travel Hunters (The), List of all Airlines in Nigeria: Their Owners and Official Websites (Updated), n.d., [url](#)





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Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025. The source works for an international research organisation monitoring conflict dynamics across the world. The source wished to remain anonymous for security and operational reasons.

Nwoha R., online interview with EUAA, 18 July 2025. Roland Nwoha is the Country Director at IRARA Nigeria, an NGO with headquarters in Benin city (Edo State) that provides support, including temporary accommodation and reintegration assistance to returnees. IRARA Nigeria is also an implementing partner of the Frontex Reintegration Programme.

Omaiboje M., email communication with EUAA, 8 July 2025. Morenike Omaiboje is a director at Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), an NGO with headquarters in Lagos, providing support to women survivors of violence and trafficking, including returnees.

Pratten D., email communication with EUAA, 29 July 2025. David Pratten is an Associate Professor in the Social Anthropology of Africa at University of Oxford. His research is based on a long-term engagement with Annang villagers in south-eastern Nigeria and focuses on themes of history, violence and the state. The focus of his initial work was an historical ethnography of colonialism which focused on the events surrounding a series of mysterious deaths in south-eastern Nigeria during the late 1940s. More recently his research has examined issues of youth, democracy and disorder in post-colonial Nigeria with a particular focus on vigilantism and new masquerade performances.

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## Annex 2: Terms of Reference

### Country overview

Key information on the country

State structure, system of government and political situation

Demographics

### Human rights overview and treatment of specific profiles

#### General situation

- International and nation legal instruments
- Death penalty
- Extra-judicial execution, corporal punishments and other violations
- General prison conditions

#### Treatment of specific profiles and groups of the population

Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)

- Latest developments on legal framework and prevalence
- Women victims of trafficking
- Children victims of trafficking
- Men victims of trafficking
- Traffickers and modus operandi
- Reintegration of returnees
- Treatment by family and society
- Re-trafficking

Women and girls

- Legal framework and its implementation
- Situation of single women without support network
- Violence against women and girls

Children

LGBTIQ individuals

Journalists and media workers

Protesters, activists and human rights defenders

Members and perceived supporters of political parties and separatist movements



Individuals targeted by Boko Haram

Christians in areas where they are a minority

Muslims in areas where they are a minority (up to 3 pages)

Perceived Boko Haram members or supporters

Individuals targeted by student cults

Individuals refusing chieftaincy titles

Individuals with disabilities, especially mental health disabilities

Individuals accused of witchcraft

State response towards human rights violations

## Key socio-economic indicators

General trends at country level (and geographical variation where relevant) with a focus on the cities of Lagos and Abuja.

Economic situation

Employment

Poverty

Food security

Housing and living conditions

Education

Healthcare

Availability of state support mechanism for individuals without social network (women; orphans; IDPs and returnees)

Mobility and internal travel (international and domestic flights)

Access to airports and freedom of movement





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